



3 1761 06892045 3

LEIGH HUNT
AS
ESSAYIST

H&SS

1

2723

"I AM A PERFECT GLUTTON
OF BOOKS"

Leigh Hunt



· E · HARRIS ·

Wm D. Dodd
Nov. 4/48
from J.K.S.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
University of Toronto

LEIGH HUNT AS ESSAYIST



Joseph Hunt

LEIGH HUNT
AS
ESSAYIST

SELECTED BY W. H. BAXTER

BAXTER PUBLISHING CO. - LONDON

I should like to remain visible in this shape. The little of myself that pleases myself, I could wish to be accounted worth pleasing others.

LEIGH HUNT



CONTENTS

	PAGE
Biography 	6
A Rainy Day 	9
A Now 	11
Shaking Hands 	15
Thoughts and Guesses on Human Nature ...	18
My Books 	25
Of Dreams 	29
To Any One Whom Bad Weather Depresses ...	38
Ver-Vert—The Parrot of the Nuns 	41
Angling 	54
A Day by the Fire 	56
At Breakfast 	59
During the Afternoon 	62
At Twilight 	65
With Tea or Coffee 	72
Until Bedtime 	74
Of Sticks 	80
A Human Animal, and the Other Extreme ...	91
On the Talking of Nonsense 	101
On Seeing a Pigeon Make Love 	108
Pantomimes 	116
The Old Gentleman 	121

B I O G R A P H Y

James Henry Leigh Hunt, son of a Church of England clergyman, was born on the 19th October, 1784, in Southgate, Middlesex.

In 1792 Leigh Hunt, being then 7 years old, entered Christ's Hospital as a student, just after Lamb and Coleridge left there. But school life was not to his taste, and he was happy when, at the age of fifteen, he was allowed to leave. He had, however, sown the seeds of a literary career, and many of his Masters and Schoolfellows live again as he recalls them in his essays. For some little time after leaving school his life was very desultory, but he continued to write with great industry.

In 1801 his father published Leigh Hunt's first book "JUVENILIA" with a portrait of the boy author. "I was as proud, perhaps, of the book at that time," wrote Leigh Hunt when he had grown older and famous, "as I am ashamed of it now."

His first venture in journalism was in 1804 in a series of papers called "THE TRAVELLER."

In 1805 he wrote for "THE NEWS," a paper that had been started by his brother, John. After a short interval, during which he held a position in the War Office, he undertook the editorship of "The Examiner," the first number appearing in 1808.

In 1809 he married Marianne Kent.

Eight years later he brought out a collection of Essays on Literature, in collaboration with Hazlitt. Taking the advice of his dearest friend, Shelley, he embarked for Italy in 1821 in search of better fortunes and warmer climate, accompanied by his sick wife and their children. For him the main interest of this venturesome journey to central Italy, was that it brought him into closer association with Byron as well as Shelley. Unfortunately, this happy trio was short-lived. Shelley was drowned in 1822, and his body washed ashore near the town of Viza Reggio. In the jacket of the drowned poet was found open Leigh Hunt's copy of Keat's "Lamia."

After Shelley's death, Byron found that upon him alone lay the responsibility of helping Hunt, his sick wife and their numerous children. This likewise was not destined to last long for, on the 19th April, 1824, Byron too died.

Rather more than a year later, Leigh Hunt returned to England, his health still broken. Whilst living in Highgate he resumed his work

as an essayist by issuing a new periodical entitled "*THE COMPANION*."

In June, 1847, a letter from Lord Russell announced that her Majesty had conferred upon him an annual pension of £200. "Allow me to add," wrote his lordship in conclusion, "that the severe treatment you formerly received, in times of unjust persecution of Liberal writers, enhances the satisfaction with which I make this announcement."

A great tragedy befell Leigh Hunt in the death of his wife in 1857, at the age of sixty-nine.

During the first few months of 1859 he was still industriously contributing to periodicals, and on the 28th August, of that year, he died at the age of seventy-five. He was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery, where for 10 years after, his grave remained unmarked.

W. H. V. B.

A RAINY DAY

The day that we speak of is a complete one of its kind, beginning with a dark wet morning, and ending in a drenching night. When you come downstairs from your chamber, you find the breakfast-room looking dark, the rain-spout pouring away, and, unless you live in a street of traffic, no sound out of doors but a clack of pattens and an occasional clang of milk-pails.

The preparation for a rainy day in town is certainly not the pleasantest thing in the world especially for those who have neither health nor imagination to make their own sunshine. The comparative silence in the streets, which is made dull by our knowing the cause of it; the window-panes, drenched and ever-streaming, like so many helpless cheeks; the darkened rooms; and, in the summer season, the having left off fires; all fall like a chill shade upon the spirits. But we know not how much pleasantry can be made out of unpleasantness till we bestir ourselves. The exercise of our bodies will make us bear the weather better, even mentally, and the exercise of our minds will enable us to bear it with patient bodies indoors, if we cannot go out. Above all, some people seem to think that they cannot have a fire made in a chill day, because it is summer-time—a notion which under the guise of being seasonable, is quite the reverse, and one against which we protest. A fire is a thing to warm us when we are cold, not to go out because the name of the month begins with J.

Beside, the sound of it helps to dissipate that of the rain. It is justly cold a companion. It looks glad in our faces; it talks to us; is vivified at our touch; it vivifies in return; it puts life and warmth and comfort in the room. A good fellow is bound to see that he leaves this substitute for his company when he goes out—especially to a lady, whose solitary work-table in a chill room on such a day is a very melancholy refuge. We exhort her, if she can afford it, to take a book and a footstool, and plant herself before a good fire. We know of few baulks more complete than coming down of a chill morning to breakfast, turning one's chair, as usual, to the fireside, planting one's feet on the fender and one's eyes on a book, and suddenly discovering that there is no fire in the grate. A grate, that ought to have a fire in it, and gapes in one's face with none, is like a cold, grinning, empty rascal.

There is something, we think, not disagreeable in issuing forth during a good, honest, summer rain, with a coat well buttoned up and an umbrella over our heads. The first flash open of the umbrella seems a defiance to the shower, and the sound of it afterwards over our dry heads corroborates the triumph. If we are in this humour, it does not matter how drenching the day is. We despise the expensive effeminacy of a coach, have an agreeable malice of self-content at the sight of crowded gateways, and see nothing in the furious little rain-spouts but a lively little emblem of critical opposition—

ESSAYS

weak, low, washy, and dirty—gabbling away with a perfect impotence of splutter.

Our limits compel us to bring this article to a speedier conclusion than we thought. We must therefore say little of a world of things we intended to descant on—of pattens; and eaves; and hackney-coaches; and waiting in vain to go out on a party of pleasure, while the youngest of us insists every minute that “it is going to hold up”; and umbrellas dripping on one’s shoulder; and the abomination of soaked gloves; and standing up in gateways, when you hear now and then the passing roar of rain on an umbrella; and the glimpses of the green country at the end of the streets; and the foot-marked earth of the country roads; and clouds eternally following each other from the west; and the scent of the luckless new-mown hay; and the rainbow; and the glorious thunder and lightning; and a party waiting to go home at night; and last of all, the delicious moment of taking off your wet things, and resting in the dry and warm content of your gown and slippers.

A NOW

Descriptive of a hot day

Now the rosy—(and lazy)—fingered Aurora, issuing from her saffron house, calls up the moist vapours to surround her, and goes veiled with them as long as she can; till Phœbus, coming forth in his power, looks everything out of the

sky, and holds sharp uninterrupted empire from his throne of beams. Now the mower begins to make his sweeping cuts more slowly, and resorts oftener to the beer. Now the carter sleeps a-top of his load of hay, or plods with double slouch of shoulder, looking out with eyes winking under his shading hat, and with a hitch upward of one side of his mouth. Now the little girl at her grandmother's cottage-door watches the coaches that go by, with her hand held up over her sunny forehead. Now the labourers look well, resting in their white shirts at the doors of rural alehouses. Now an elm is fine there, with a seat under it; and horses drink out of the trough, stretching their yearning necks with loosened collars; and the traveller calls for his glass of ale, having been without one for more than ten minutes; and his horse stands wincing at the flies, giving sharp shivers of his skin, and moving to and fro his ineffectual docked tail; and now Miss Betty Wilson, the host's daughter, comes streaming forth in a flowered gown and ear-rings, carrying with four of her beautiful fingers and the foaming glass, for which, after the traveller has drank it, she receives with an indifferent eye, looking another way, the lawful twopence; that is to say, unless the traveller, nodding his ruddy face, pays some gallant compliment to her before he drinks, such as, "I'd rather kiss you, my dear, than the tumbler"; or, "I'll wait for you, my love, if you'll marry me"; upon which, if the man is good-looking, and the lady in good-humour, she smiles and bites her lips, and says, "Ah, men

can talk fast enough "; upon which the old stage-coachman, who is buckling something near her, before he sets off, says in a hoarse voice, " So can women too, for that matter," and John Boots grins through his ragged red locks, and dotes on the repartée all the day after. Now grasshoppers " fry," as Dryden says. Now cattle stand in water, and ducks are envied. Now boots and shoes, and trees by the road-side, are thick with dust; and dogs, rolling in it, after issuing out of the water, into which they have been thrown to fetch sticks, come scattering horror among the legs of the spectators. Now a fellow who finds he has three miles farther to go in a pair of tight shoes is in a pretty situation. Now rooms with the sun upon them become intolerable; and the apothecary's apprentice, with a bitterness beyond aloes, thinks of the pond he used to bathe in at school. Now men with powdered heads (especially if thick) envy those that are unpowdered, and stop to wipe them up-hill, with countenances that seem to expostulate with destiny. Now boys assemble round the village pump with a ladle to it, and delight to make a forbidden splash, and get wet through the shoes. Now also they make suckers of leather, and bathe all day long in rivers and ponds, and follow the fish into their cool corners, and say millions of " My eyes " at " tittle bats." Now the bee, as he hums along, seems to be talking heavily of the heat. Now doors and brick-walls are burning to the hand; and a walled lane, with dust and broken bottles in it,

crush was no less complimentary; the face was as earnest and beaming, the "glad to see you" as syllabical and sincere, and the shake as close, as long, and as rejoicing, as if the semi-unknown was a friend come home from the Deserts.

On the other hand, there would be a gentleman now and then as coy of his hand as if he were a prude, or had a whitlow (Hazlitt). It was in vain that your pretensions did not go beyond the "civil salute" of the ordinary shake; or that, being introduced to him in a friendly manner, and expected to shake hands with the rest of the company, you could not in decency omit this. His fingers, half coming out and half retreating, seemed to think that you were going to do to them a mischief; and when you got hold of them, the whole shake was on your side: the other hand did but proudly or pensively acquiesce—there was no knowing which: you had to sustain it, as you might a lady's in handing her to a seat: and it was an equal perplexity to know how to shake or let it go. The one seemed a violence done to the patient; the other, an awkward responsibility brought upon yourself. You did not know, all the evening, whether you were not an object of dislike to the person; till, on the party's breaking up, you saw him behave like an equally ill-used gentleman to all who practised the same unthinking civility.

Both these errors, we think, might as well be avoided; but, of the two, we must say we prefer the former. If it does not look so much like particular sincerity, it looks more like general

kindness; and if those two virtues are to be separated (which they assuredly need not be, if considered without spleen), the world can better afford to dispense with an unpleasant truth than a gratuitous humanity. Besides, it is more difficult to make sure of the one than to practise the other; and kindness itself is the best of all truths. As long as we are sure of that, we are sure of something, and of something pleasant. It is always the best end, if not in every instance the most logical means.

This manual shyness is sometimes attributed to modesty, but never, we suspect, with justice, unless it be that sort of modesty whose fear of committing itself is grounded in pride. Want of address is a better reason, but this particular instance of it would be grounded in the same feeling. It always implies a habit either of pride or distrust. We have met with two really kind men who evinced this soreness of hand. Neither of them perhaps thought himself inferior to anybody about him, and both had good reason to think highly of themselves; but both had been sanguine men contradicted in their early hopes. There was a plot to meet the hand of one of them with a fish-slice, in order to show him the disadvantage to which he puts his friends by that flat mode of salutation; but the conspirator had not the courage to do it. Whether he heard of the intention, we know not; but shortly afterwards he took very kindly to a shake. The other was the only man of a warm set of politicians who remained true to his first love of mankind.

He was impatient at the change of his companions, and at the folly and inattention of the rest; but though his manner became cold, his consistency still remained warm; and this gave him a right to be as strange as he pleased.

THOUGHTS AND GUESSES ON HUMAN NATURE

Confusion of Modes of Being

People undertake to settle what ideas they shall have under such and such circumstances of being, when it is nothing but their present state of being that enables them to have those ideas.

Diversity of our Sensations

There is reason to suppose that our perceptions and sensations are much more different than we imagine, even upon the most ordinary things, such as visible objects in general, and the sense of existence. We have enough in common for common intercourse; but the details are dissimilar, as we may perceive in the variety of palates. All people are agreed upon sweet and sour; but one man prefers sour to sweet, and another this and that variety of sour and sweet.

Variety of our Perceptions

We may gather, from what we read of diseased imaginations, how much our perceptions depend upon the modification of our being.

We see how personal and inexperienced we are when we determine that such and such ideas must take place under other circumstances, and such and such truths be always indisputable. Pleasure must always be pleasure, and pain be pain, because they are only names for certain results. But the results themselves will be pleasurable or painful according to what they act upon. A man in health becomes sickly; he has a fever, is light-headed, is hypochondriacal. His ideas are deranged, or rearrange themselves; and a set of new perceptions, and colourings of his existence, take place, as in a kaleidoscope when we shake it. The conclusion is, that every alteration of our physical particles, or of whatever else we are compounded with, produces a different set of perceptions and sensations. What we call health of body and mind is the fittest state of our composition upon earth; but the state of perception which is sickly to one state of existence, may be healthy to another.

Childhood and Knowledge

When children are in good health and temper, they have a sense of existence which seems too exquisite to last. It is made up of clearness of blood, freshness of perception, and trustingness of heart. We remember the time when the green rails along a set of suburb gardens used to fill us with a series of holiday and rural sensations perfectly intoxicating. According to the state of our health, we have sunny glimpses

of this feeling still; to say nothing of many other pleasures, which have paid us for many pains. The best time to catch them is early in the morning, at sunrise, out in the country. And we will here add, that life never, perhaps, feels such a return of fresh and young feeling upon it as in early rising on a fine morning, whether in country or town. The healthiness of it, the quiet, the consciousness of having done a sort of good action (not to add a wise one), and the sense of power it gives you over the coming day, produce a mixture of lightness and self possession in one's feelings, which a sick man must not despair of, because he does not feel it the first morning. But even this reform should be adopted by degrees. The best way to recommend it is to begin with allowing fair play to the other side of the question. To return to our main point. After childhood comes a knowledge of evil, or a sophisticated and unhealthy mode of life; or one produces the other, and both are embittered. Everything tells us to get back to a state of childhood—pain, pleasure, imagination, reason, passion, natural affection or piety, the better part of religion. If knowledge is supposed to be incompatible with it, knowledge would sacrifice herself, if necessary, to the same cause, for she also tells us to do so. But as a little knowledge first leads us away from happiness, so a greater knowledge may be destined to bring us back into a finer region of it.

ESSAYS

Knowledge and Unhappiness

It is not knowledge that makes us unhappy as we grow up, but the knowledge of unhappiness. Yet, as unhappiness existed when we knew it not, it becomes us all to be acquainted with it, that we may all have the chance of bettering the condition of our species. Who would say to himself, "I would be happy, though all my fellow-creatures were miserable!" Knowledge must heal what it wounds, and extend the happiness which it has taken away. It must do by our comfort as a friend may do by one's books; enrich it with its comments. One man grows up, and gets unhealthy without knowledge; another, with it. The former suffers, and does not know why. He is unhappy, and he sees unhappiness; but he can do nothing either for himself or others. The latter suffers, and discovers why. He suffers even more, because he knows more; but he learns also how to diminish suffering in others. He learns, too, to apply his knowledge to his own case: and he sees that, as he himself suffers from the world's want of knowledge, so the progress of knowledge would take away both the world's sufferings and his own. The efforts to this end worry him, perhaps, and make him sickly; upon which, thinking is pronounced to be injurious to health. And it may be so, under these circumstances. What, then, if it betters the health of the many? But thinking may also teach him how to be healthier. A game of cricket on a green may do for him what no want of thought would

have done; and, on the other hand, if he shows a want of thought upon these points, then the inference is easy: he is not so thinking a man as you took him for. Addison should have got on horseback, instead of walking up and down a room in his house, with a bottle of wine at each end of it. Shakespeare divided his time between town and country, and, in the latter part of his life, built, and planted, and petted his daughter Susanna. Solomon in his old age played the Anacreon; and, with Milton's leave, "his wisest heart" was not so much out in this matter as when his royal impatience induced him to say that everything was vanity.

Childhood—Old Age—Our Destiny

There appears to be something in the composition of humanity like what we have observed in that of music. The musician's first thought is apt to be his finest: he must carry it on, and make a second part to his air; and he becomes inferior. Nature, in like manner (if we may speak it without profaneness), appears to succeed best in making childhood and youth. The symphony is a little perturbed; but in what a sprightly manner the air sets off! What purity! What grace! What touching simplicity! Then comes sin, or the notion of it, and "breaks the fair music." Well did a wiser than the "wisest heart" bid us try and continue children. But there are foolish as well as wise children, and it is a special mark of the former, whether

little or grown, to affect manhood, and to confound it with cunning and violence. Do men die, in order that life and its freshness may be as often and as multitudinously renewed as possible? Or do children grow old, that our consciousness may attain to some better mode of being through a rough path?

Endeavour

Either this world (to use the style of Marcus Antoninus) is meant to be what it is, or it is not. If it is not, then our endeavours to render it otherwise are right: if it is, then we must be as we are, and seek excitement through the same means, and our endeavours are still right. In either case, endeavour is good and useful, but in one of them, the want of it must be a mistake.

Good In Things Evil

God Almighty!

*There is some soul of goodness in things evil,
Would men observingly distil it out!*

So, with equal wisdom and good-nature, does Shakespeare make one of his characters exclaim. Suffering gives strength and sympathy. Hate of the particular may have a foundation in love for the general. The lowest and most wilful vice may plunge deeper, out of a regret of a virtue. Even in envy may be discerned something of an instinct of justice, something of a wish to see universal fair-play, and things on a level. " But

there is still a residuum of evil, of which we should all wish to get rid." Well, then, let us try.

Artifice of Exaggerated Complaint

Disappointment likes to make out bad to be worse than it is, in order to relieve the gnawing of its actual wound. It would confuse the limits of its pain; and, by extending it too far, try to make itself uncertain how far it reached.

Custom, Its Self-Reconcilements and Contradictions

Custom is seen more in what we bear than what we enjoy. And yet a pain long borne so fits itself to our shoulders that we do not miss even that without disquietude. The novelty of the sensation startles us. Montaigne, like our modern beaux, was uneasy when he did not feel himself well braced up and tightened in his clothing. Prisoners have known to wish to go back to their prisons; invalids have missed the accompaniment of an old gunshot wound; and the world is apt to be very angry with reformers and innovators, not because it is in the right, but because it is accustomed to be in the wrong. This is a good thing, and shows the indestructible tendency of nature to forgo its troubles. But then reformers and innovators must arise, upon that very ground. To quarrel with them upon a principle of avowed spleen, is candid, and has a self-knowledge in it. But to resent

them as impertinent or effeminate, is at bottom to quarrel with the principle of one's own patience, and to set the fear of moving above the courage of it.

MY BOOKS

Sitting, last winter, among my books, and walled round with all the comfort and protection which they and my fireside could afford me; to wit, a table of high-piled books at my back, my writing desk on one side of me, some shelves on the other, and the feeling of the warm fire at my feet; I began to consider how I loved the authors of those books—how I loved them, too, not only for the imaginative pleasures they afforded me, but for their making me love the very books themselves, and delight to be in contact with them. I looked sideways at my Spenser, my Theocritus, and my "Arabian Nights"; then above them at my Italian poets; then behind me at my Dryden and Pope, my romances, and my Boccaccio; then on my left side at my Chaucer, who lay on a writing desk; and thought how natural it was in C.L. to give a kiss to an old folio, as I once saw him do to Chapman's Homer. Cooke's edition of the "British Poets and Novelists" came out when I was at school. Shall I ever forget his Collins and his Gray, books at once so "superbly ornamented" and so inconceivably cheap? Sixpence could procure much before; but never could it procure so much as then, or was at once so much

respected, and so little cared for. His artist Kirk was the best artist, except Stothard, that ever designed for periodical works. I shall never forget the gratitude with which I received an odd number of Akenside, value sixpence. It was the one in which there is a picture of the poet on a sofa, with Cupid coming to him, and the words underneath, "Tempt me no more, insidious love!" The picture and the number appeared to me equally divine. I cannot help thinking to this day, that it is right and natural in a gentleman to sit in a stage dress, on that particular kind of sofa, though on no other, with that exclusive hat and feathers on his head, telling Cupid to begone with a tragic air.

I love an author the more for having been himself a lover of books. Virgil must have been one; and, after a fashion, Martial. May I confess, that the passage which I recollect with the greatest pleasure in Cicero, is where he says that books delight us at home, *and are no impediment abroad*; travel with us, ruralize with us. His period is rounded off to some purpose: "*Delectant domi, non impediunt foris; peregrinantur, rusticantur.*" I am so much of this opinion that I do not care to be anywhere without having a book or books at hand, and like Dr. Orkborne, in the novel of "Camilla," stuff the coach or post-chaise with them whenever I travel. Dante puts Homer, the great ancient, in his "Elysium" upon trust; but a few years afterwards, "Homer," the book, made its appearance in Italy, and Petrarch, in a transport, put it upon

ESSAYS

his bookshelves, where he adored it, like "the unknown God." Petrarch ought to be the god of the bibliomaniacs, for he was a collector and a man of genius, which is a union that does not often happen. He copied out, with his own precious hand, the manuscripts he rescued from time, and then produced others for time to reverence. With his head upon a book he died.

Spenser's reading is evident by his learning; and if there were nothing else to show for it in Shakespeare, his retiring to his native town, long before old age, would be a proof of it. It is impossible for a man to live in solitude without such assistance, unless he is a metaphysician or mathematician, or the dullest of mankind; and any country town would be solitude to Shakespeare, after the bustle of a metropolis and a theatre. Doubtless he divided his time between his books, and his bowling-green, and his daughter Susanna. It is pretty certain, also, that he planted, and rode on horseback; and there is evidence of all sorts to make it clear, that he must have occasionally joked with the blacksmith, and stood godfather for his neighbours' children.

There will be something compulsory in reading the "Ramblers," as there is in going to Church. Gray was a bookman; he wished to be always lying on sofas, reading "eternal new novels of Crebillon and Marivaux."

How pleasant it is to reflect, that all those lovers of books have themselves become books! What better metamorphosis could Pythagoras

have desired? How Ovid and Horace exulted in anticipating theirs! And how the world has justified their exultation. They had a right to triumph over brass and marble. It is the only visible change which changes no farther; which generates and yet is not destroyed. Consider: mines themselves are exhausted; cities perish; kingdoms are swept away, and man weeps with indignation to think that his own body is not immortal.

Yet this little body of thought, that lies before me in the shape of a book, has existed thousands of years, nor since the invention of the press can anything short of a universal convulsion of nature abolish it. To a shape like this, so small yet so comprehensive, so slight yet so lasting, so insignificant yet so venerable, turns the mighty activity of Homer, and so turning, is enabled to live and warm us forever. To a shape like this turns the placid sage of Academus: to a shape like this the grandeur of Milton, the exuberance of Spenser, the pungent elegance of Pope, and the volatility of Prior. In one small room, like the compressed spirits of Milton, can be gathered together.

The assembled souls is all that men held wise.

May I hope to become the meanest of these existences? This is a question which every author who is a lover of books asks himself some time in his life; and which must be pardoned, because it cannot be helped. I know not. But I should like to remain visible in this shape. The

little of myself that pleases myself, I could wish to be accounted worth pleasing others. I should like to survive so, were it only for the sake of those who love me in private, knowing as I do what a treasure is the possession of a friend's mind when he is no more. At all events, nothing while I live and think can deprive me of my value for such treasures. I can help the appreciation of them while I last, and love them till I die; and perhaps, if fortune turns her face once more in kindness upon me before I go, I may chance, some quiet day, to lay my over-beating temples on a book, and so have the death I most envy.

OF DREAMS

The materialists and psychologists are at issue upon the subject of dreams. The latter hold them to be one among the many proofs of the existence of a soul: the former endeavour to account for them upon principles altogether corporeal. We must own that the effects of their respective arguments, as is usual with us on these occasions, is not so much to satisfy us with either as to dissatisfy us with both. The psychologist, with all his struggles, never appears to be able to get rid of his body; and the materialist leaves something extremely deficient in the vivacity of his proofs by his ignorance of that *Primum Mobile* which is the soul of everything.

What seems incontrovertible in the case of dreams is, that they are most apt to take place when the body is most affected. They seem to

turn most upon us, when the suspension of the will has been reduced to its most helpless state by indulgence. The door of the fancy is left without its keeper; and forth issue, pell-mell, the whole rout of ideas or images, which had been previously stored within the brain, and kept to their respective duties. They are like a school let loose, or the winds in Virgil, or Lord Anson's drunken sailors at Panama, who dressed themselves up in all sorts of ridiculous apparel: only they are far more wild, winged, and fantastic.

We were about to say that, being writers, we are of necessity dreamers; for thinking disposes the bodily faculties to be more than usually affected by the causes that generally produce dreaming. But extremes appear to meet on this as on other occasions; at least, as far as the meditative power is concerned; for there is an excellent reasoner, now living (Hazlitt), who, telling another that he was not fond of the wilder parts of the "Arabian Nights" was answered, with great felicity, "Then you never dream": which, it turned out, was actually the case. Here the link is totally lost that connects a tendency to indigestion with thinking on the one hand, and dreaming on the other. If we are to believe Herodotus the Atlantes, an African people, never dreamt; which Montaigne is willing to attribute to their never having eaten anything that died of itself. It is to be presumed that he looked upon their temperance as a matter of course. The same philosopher, who was a deep thinker, and of a delicate constitution, informs us that he

himself dreamt but sparingly; but then, when he did, his dreams were fantastic, though cheerful. This is the very triumph of the animal spirits, to unite the strangeness of sick dreams with the cheerfulness of healthy ones. To these exceptions against the usual theories we may add that dreams, when they occur, are by no means modified of necessity by what the mind has been occupied with in the course of the day, or even of months; for during our two years' confinement in prison, we have a strong recollection that we did not dream more than twice of our chief subjects of reflection, the prison itself not excepted. The two dreams were both about the latter, and both the same. We fancied that we had slipped out of jail, and gone to the theatre, where we were much horrified by seeing the faces of the whole audience unexpectedly turned upon us.

It is certain enough, however, that dreams in general proceed from indigestion; and it appears nearly as much so, that they are more or less strange according to the waking fancy of the dreamer.

It is probable that a trivial degree of indigestion will give rise to very fantastic dreams in a fanciful mind; while, on the other hand, a good orthodox repletion is necessary towards a fanciful creation in a dull one. It shall make an epicure, of any vivacity, act as many parts in his sleep as a tragedian, "for that night only." The inspirations of veal in particular are accounted extremely Delphic: Italian pickles partake of the

spirit of Dante; and a butter-boat shall contain as many ghosts as Charon's.

There is a passage in Lucian which would have made a good subject for those who painted the temptations of the saints. It is a description of the City of Dreams, very lively and crowded. We quote after Natalis Comes, not having the *True History* by us. The city, we are told, stands in an immense plain, surrounded by a thick forest of tall poppy trees, and enormous mandragoras. The plain is also full of all sorts of somnifolious plants; and the trees are haunted with multitudes of owls and bats, but no other bird. The city is washed by the river Lethe, called by others the Night-bringer, whose course is inaudible and like the flowing of oil. There are two gates to the city: one of horn, in which almost everything that can happen in sleep is represented, as in a transparency; the other of ivory, in which the dreams are but dimly shadowed. The principal temple is that of Night; and there are others, dedicated to Truth and Falsehood, who have oracles. The population consists of Dreams, who are of an infinite variety of shape. Some are small and slender; others distorted, humped, and monstrous; others very proper and tall, with blooming, good-tempered faces. Others again have terrible countenances, are winged, and seem eternally threatening the city with some calamity; while others walk about in the pomp and garniture of kings. If any mortal comes into the place, there is a multitude of

ESSAYS

domestic Dreams, who meet him with offers of service; and who are followed by some of the others, that bring him good or bad news, generally false; for the inhabitants of that city are for the most part a lying and crafty generation, speaking one thing, and thinking another. This is having a new advantage over us. Only think of the mental reservation of a Dream!

If Lucian had divided his city into ranks and denominations, he might possibly have classed them under the general heads of Dreams Lofty, Dreams Ludicrous, Dreams Pathetic, Dreams Horrible, Dreams Bodily, Painful or Pleasant, Dreams of Common Life, Dreams of New Aspects of Humanity, Dreams Mixed, Fantastic, and utterly Confused. He speaks of winged ones; which is judicious, for they are very common. Nothing is more common, or usually more pleasant, than to dream of flying. It is one of the best specimens of the race; for, besides being agreeable, it is made up of the dreams of ordinary life, and those of surprising combination. Thus the dreamer sometimes thinks he is flying in unknown regions, sometimes skimming only a few inches above the ground, and wondering he never did it before. He will even dream that he is dreaming about it; and yet is so fully convinced of its feasibility, and so astonished at his never having hit upon so delightful a truism, that he is resolved to practise it the moment he wakes. "One has only," says he, "just to give a little spring with one's foot—so—and—oh, it's the easiest and most obvious thing in the world.

I'll always skim hereafter." We once dreamt that a woman set up some Flying Rooms, as a person does a tavern. We went to try them; and nothing could be more satisfactory and commonplace on all side. The landlady welcomed us with a curtesy, hoped for friends and favours, etc., and then showed us into a spacious room, not round, as might be expected, but long, and after the usual dining fashion. "Perhaps, sir," said she, "you would like to try the room"; upon which we made no more ado, but sprung up and made two or three genteel circuits, now taking the height of it like a house-lark, and then cutting the angles like a swallow. "Very pretty flying indeed," said we, "and very moderate."

A house for the purpose of taking flights in, when the open air was to be had for nothing, is fantastic enough; but what shall we say to those confoundings of all time, place, and substance, which are constantly happening to persons of any creativeness of diaphragm? Thus you shall meet a friend in a gateway, who beside being your friend shall be your enemy; and besides being Jones or Tomkins, shall be a bull; and besides asking you in, shall oppose your entrance. Nevertheless, you are not at all surprised; or if surprised, are only so at something not at all surprising. To be Tomkins and a bull at once, is the most ordinary of common-places; but that, being a bull, he should have horns, is what astonishes you; and you are also amazed at his not being in Holborn or the Strand, where he never lived. To be in two places at once is

not uncommon to a dreamer. He will also be young and old at the same time, a school-boy and a man; will live many years in a few minutes, like the Sultan who dipped his head in the tub of water; will be full of zeal and dialogue upon some matter of indifference; go to the opera with a dish under his arm, to be in the fashion; talk faster in verse than prose; and ask a set of horses to a musical party, telling them that he knows they will be pleased, because blue is the general wear, and Mozart has gone down to Gloucestershire to fit up a house for Epaminondas.

It is a curious proof of the concern which body has in these vagaries, that when you dream of any particular limb being in pain, you shall often have gone to sleep in a posture that affects it. A weight on the feet will produce dreams in which you are rooted to the ground, or caught by a goblin out of the earth. A cramped hand or leg shall get you tortured in the Inquisition; and a head too much thrown back, give you the sense of an interminable visitation of stifling. The nightmare, the heaviest punisher of repletion, will visit some persons, merely for lying on their backs; which shows how much it is concerned in a particular condition of the frame. Sometimes it lies upon the chest like a vital lump. Sometimes it comes in the guise of a horrid dwarf, or malignant little hag, who grins in your teeth and will not let you rise. Its most common enormity is to pin you to the ground with excess of fear, while something dreadful

is coming up, a goblin or a mad bull. Sometimes the horror is of a very elaborate description, such as being spell-bound in an old house, which has a mysterious and shocking possessor. He is a gigantic deformity, and will pass presently through the room in which you are sitting. He comes, not a giant, but a dwarf, of the most strange and odious description, hairy, spider-like, and chuckling. His mere passage is unbearable. The agony rises at every step. You would protest against so malignant a sublimation of the shocking, but are unable to move or speak. At length, you give loud and long-drawn groans, and start up with a preternatural effort, awake.

Mr. Coleridge, whose sleeping imagination seems proportioned to his waking, has described a fearful dream of mental and bodily torture. It is entitled "The Pains of Sleep."

If horrible and fantastic dreams are the most perplexing, there are pathetic ones perhaps still more saddening. A friend dreaming of the loss of his friend, or a lover of that of his mistress, or a kinsman of that of a dear relation, is steeped in the bitterness of death. To wake and find it not true—what a delicious sensation is that! On the other hand, to dream of a friend or a beloved relative restored to us—to live over again the hours of childhood at the knee of a beloved mother, to be on the eve of marrying an affectionate mistress, with a thousand other joys snatched back out of the grave, and too painful to dwell upon—what a dreary rush of sensation comes like a shadow upon us when we wake!

ESSAYS

How true, and divested of all that is called conceit in poetry, is that termination of Milton's sonnet on dreaming of his deceased wife:—

*But oh, as to embrace me she inclined,
I waked; she fled; and day brought back my night.*

We wonder that so good and cordial a critic as Warton should think this a mere conceit on his blindness. An allusion to his blindness may or may not be involved in it; but the sense of returning shadow on the mind is quite true to nature on such occasions, and must have been experienced by everyone who has lost a person dear to him. There is a beautiful sonnet by Camoens on a similar occasion; a small canzone by Sanazzaro, which ends with saying, that although he waked and missed his lady's hand in his, he still tried to cheat himself by keeping his eyes shut; and three divine dreams of Laura by Petrarch.

But we must be cautious how we even think of the poets on this most poetical subject, or we shall write three articles instead of one. As it is, we have not left ourselves room for some very agreeable dreams, which we meant to have taken between these our gallant and imaginative sheets. They must be interrupted, as they are too apt to be, like the young lady's in "The Adventures of a Lap-dog," who, blushing divinely, had just uttered the words, "My lord, I am wholly yours," when she was awaked by the jumping of that officious little puppy.

LEIGH HUNT

TO ANY ONE WHOM BAD WEATHER
DEPRESSES

If you are melancholy for the first time, you will find upon a little inquiry that others have been melancholy many times, and yet are cheerful now. If you have been melancholy many times, recollect that you have got over all those times; and try if you cannot find new means of getting over them better.

Do not imagine that mind alone is concerned in your bad spirits. The body has a great deal to do with these matters. The mind may undoubtedly affect the body; but the body also affects the mind. There is a mutual reaction between them; and by lessening it on either side, you diminish the pain on both.

If you are melancholy, and know not why, be assured it must arise entirely from some physical weakness; and do your best to strengthen yourself. The blood of a melancholy man is thick and slow. The blood of a lively man is clear and quick. Endeavour, therefore, to put your blood in motion. Exercise is the best way to do it; but you may also help yourself, in moderation, with wine, or other excitements. Only you must take care so to proportion the use of any artificial stimulus that it may not render the blood languid by over-exciting it at first; and that you may be able to keep up, by the natural stimulus only, the help you have given yourself by the artificial.

Regard the bad weather as somebody has advised us to handle the nettle. In proportion

as you are delicate with it, it will make you feel;
but

*Grasp it like a man of mettle,
And it soft as silk remains.*

Do not the less, however, on that account, take all reasonable precaution and arms against it—your boots, etc., against wet feet, and your great-coat or umbrella against the rain. It is timidity and flight which are to be deprecated, not proper armour for the battle. The first will lay you open to defeat on the least attack. A proper use of the latter will only keep you strong for it. Plato had such a high opinion of exercise that he said it was a cure even for a wounded conscience.

Diminish your mere wants as much as possible, whether you are rich or poor; for the rich man's wants, increasing by indulgence, are apt to outweigh even the abundance of his means; and the poor man's diminution of them renders his means the greater. Do not want money, for instance, for money's sake. There is excitement in the pursuit; but it is dashed with more troubles than most others, and gets less happiness at last. On the other hand, increase all your natural and healthy enjoyments. Cultivate your afternoon fireside, the society of your friends, the company of agreeable children, music, theatres, amusing books, an urbane and generous gallantry. He who thinks any innocent pastime foolish, has either yet to grow wiser, or is past it. In the one case, his notion of being

childish is itself a childish notion. In the other, his importance is of so feeble and hollow a cast, that it dare not move for fear of tumbling to pieces.

A friend of ours, who knows as well as any man how to unite industry with enjoyment, has set an excellent example to those who can afford the leisure, by taking two Sabbaths every week instead of one; not Methodistical Sabbaths, but days of rest which pay true homage to the Supreme Being by enjoying His creation. He will be gratified at reading this paragraph on his second Sunday morning (Wednesday).

One of the best pieces of advice for an ailing spirit is to go to no sudden extremes—to adopt no great and extreme changes in diet or other habits. They may make a man look very great and philosophic to his own mind, but they are not fit for a nature to which custom has been truly said to be a second nature.

Bacon says that we should discontinue what we think hurtful by little and little. And he quotes with admiration the advice of Celsus, that “a man do vary and interchange contraries, but with an inclination to the more benign extreme.” “Use fasting,” he says, “and full eating, but *rather* full eating; watching and sleep, but *rather* sleep; sitting and exercise, but *rather* exercise; and the like. So shall nature be cherished, and yet taught masteries.”

VER-VERT—THE PARROT OF THE NUNS

This story is the subject of one of the most agreeable poems in the French language.

After having undergone the admiration of the circles in Paris, Gresset, the author of it, married, and lived in retirement. He died in 1777, beloved by everybody but the critics. Critics were not the good-natured people in those times which they have lately become; and they worried him as a matter of course, because he was original. He was intimate with Jean Jaques Rousseau. The self-tormenting and somewhat affected philosopher came to see him in his retreat; and being interrogated respecting his misfortunes, said to him, "You have made a parrot speak; but you will find it a harder task with a bear."

Gresset wrote other poems and a comedy, which are admired; but the Parrot is the feather in his cap. It was an addition to the stock of originality, and has greater right perhaps than the "Lutrin" to challenge a comparison with the "Rape of the Lock." This is spoken with deference to better French scholars; but there is at least more of Pope's delicacy and invention in the "Ver-Vert" than in the "Lutrin"; and it does not depend so much as the latter upon a mimicry of the classics. It is less made up of what preceded it.

I must mention that a subject of this nature is of necessity more piquant in a Catholic country

than a Protestant. But the loss of poor Ver-Vert's purity of speech comes home to all Christendom; and it is hard if the tender imagination of the fair sex do not sympathise everywhere both with parrot and with nuns. When the poem appeared in France, it touched the fibres of the whole polite world, male and female. A Minister of State made the author a present of a coffee-service in porcelain, on which was painted, in the most delicate colours, the whole history of the "immortal bird." If I had the leisure and the means of Mr. Rogers, nothing should hinder me from trying to outdo (in one respect) the delicacy of his publications, in versifying a subject so worthy of vellum and morocco. The paper should be as soft as the novice's lips, the register as rose-coloured; every canto should have vignettes from the hand of Stothard; and the binding should be green and gold, the colours of the hero.

Alas! and must all this end in a prose abstract, and an anti-climax! Weep all ye little loves and Graces, ye

Veneres Cupidinesque !

Et quantum est hominum venustiorum.

But first enable us, for our goodwill, to relate the story, albeit we cannot do it justice.

At Nevers, in the Convent of the Visitation, lived, not long ago, a famous parrot. His talents and good temper, nay, the virtues he possessed, besides his more earthly graces, would have rendered his whole life as happy as a portion of

it, if happiness had been made for hearts like his.

Ver-Vert (for such was his name) was brought early from his native country; and while yet in his tender years, and ignorant of everything, was shut up in this convent for his good. He was a handsome creature, brilliant, spruce, and full of spirits, with all the candour and amiableness natural to his time of life; innocent withal as could be: in short, a bird worthy of such a blessed cage. His very prattle showed him born for a convent.

When we say that nuns undertake to look after a thing, we say all. No need to enter into the delicacy of their attentions. Nobody could rival the affection which was borne our hero by every mother in the convent, except the confessor; and even with respect to him, a sincere MS. has left it in record, that in more than one heart the bird had the advantage of the holy father. He partook, at any rate, of all the pretty sops and syrups with which the dear father in God (thanks to the kindness of the sweet nuns) consoled his reverend stomach. Nuns have leisure: they have also loving hearts. Ver-Vert was a legitimate object of attachment, and he became the soul of the place. All the house loved him, except a few old nuns whom time and the toothache rendered jealous surveyors of the young ones. Not having arrived at years of discretion, too much judgment was not expected of him. He said and did what he pleased, and everything was found charming. He lightened the labours of the good sisters by his engaging ways—pulling

their veils, and pecking their stomachers. No party could be pleasant if he was not there to shine and to sidle about; to flutter and to whistle, and play the nightingale. Sport he did, that is certain; and yet he had all the modesty, all the prudent daring and submission in the midst of his pretensions, which became a novice, even in sporting. Twenty tongues were incessantly asking him questions, and he answered with propriety to every one. It was thus, of old, that Cæsar dictated to four persons at once in four different styles.

Our favourite had the whole range of the house. He preferred dining in the refectory, where he ate as he pleased. In the intervals of the table, being of an indefatigable stomach, he amused his palate with pocket-loads of sweetmeats which the nuns always carried about for him. Delicate attentions, ingenious and preventing cares, were born, they say, among the nuns of the Visitation. The happy Ver-Vert had reason to think so. He had a better place of it than a parrot at Court. He lay, lapped up, as it were, in the very glove of contentment.

At bedtime he repaired to whatever cell he chose, and happy, too happy was the blessed sister whose retreat at the return of nightfall it pleased him to honour with his presence. He seldom lodged with the old ones. The novices with their simple beds were more to his taste; which you must observe, had always a peculiar turn for propriety. He had the pleasure of witnessing the toilet of the fresh little nun: for

ESSAYS

between ourselves (and I say it in a whisper) nuns have toilets. Plain veils require to be put on properly, as well as lace and diamonds. Furthermore, they have their fashions and modes. There is an art, a gusto in these things, inseparable from their natures. Sackcloth itself may sit well. Huckaback may have an air. But let that rest. I say all in confidence; so now return to our hero.

In this blissful state of indolence Ver-Vert passed his time without a care—without a moment of *ennui*—lord, undisputed, of all hearts. For him, Sister Agatha forgot her sparrows; for him, or because of him, four canary birds died out of rage and spite—for him, a couple of tom-cats, once in favour, took to their cushions, and never afterwards held up their heads.

Who could have foreboded in the course of a life so charming, that the morals of our hero were taken care of, only to be ruined! that a day should arise, a day full of guilt and astonishment, when Ver-Vert, the idol of so many hearts, should be nothing but an object of pity and horror!

Let us husband our tears as long as possible, for come they must: sad fruit of the over-tender care of our dear little sisters!

You may guess that, in a school like this, a bird of our hero's parts of speech could want nothing to complete his education. He always spoke like a book. His style was pickled and preserved in the very sauce and sugar of good

their veils, and pecking their stomachers. No party could be pleasant if he was not there to shine and to sidle about; to flutter and to whistle, and play the nightingale. Sport he did, that is certain; and yet he had all the modesty, all the prudent daring and submission in the midst of his pretensions, which became a novice, even in sporting. Twenty tongues were incessantly asking him questions, and he answered with propriety to every one. It was thus, of old, that Cæsar dictated to four persons at once in four different styles.

Our favourite had the whole range of the house. He preferred dining in the refectory, where he ate as he pleased. In the intervals of the table, being of an indefatigable stomach, he amused his palate with pocket-loads of sweetmeats which the nuns always carried about for him. Delicate attentions, ingenious and preventing cares, were born, they say, among the nuns of the Visitation. The happy Ver-Vert had reason to think so. He had a better place of it than a parrot at Court. He lay, lapped up, as it were, in the very glove of contentment.

At bedtime he repaired to whatever cell he chose, and happy, too happy was the blessed sister whose retreat at the return of nightfall it pleased him to honour with his presence. He seldom lodged with the old ones. The novices with their simple beds were more to his taste; which you must observe, had always a peculiar turn for propriety. He had the pleasure of witnessing the toilet of the fresh little nun: for

between ourselves (and I say it in a whisper) nuns have toilets. Plain veils require to be put on properly, as well as lace and diamonds. Furthermore, they have their fashions and modes. There is an art, a gusto in these things, inseparable from their natures. Sackcloth itself may sit well. Huckaback may have an air. But let that rest. I say all in confidence; so now return to our hero.

In this blissful state of indolence Ver-Vert passed his time without a care—without a moment of *ennui*—lord, undisputed, of all hearts. For him, Sister Agatha forgot her sparrows; for him, or because of him, four canary birds died out of rage and spite—for him, a couple of tom-cats, once in favour, took to their cushions, and never afterwards held up their heads.

Who could have foreboded in the course of a life so charming, that the morals of our hero were taken care of, only to be ruined! that a day should arise, a day full of guilt and astonishment, when Ver-Vert, the idol of so many hearts, should be nothing but an object of pity and horror!

Let us husband our tears as long as possible, for come they must: sad fruit of the over-tender care of our dear little sisters!

You may guess that, in a school like this, a bird of our hero's parts of speech could want nothing to complete his education. He always spoke like a book. His style was pickled and preserved in the very sauce and sugar of good

behaviour. He was none of your flashy parrots, puffed up with airs of fashion and learned only in vanities. Ver-Vert was a devout fowl; a beautiful soul, led by the hand of innocence. He had no notion of evil; never uttered an improper word; but then to be even with those who knew how to talk, he was deep in canticles, *Oremuses*, and mystical colloquies. His *Pax Vobiscum* was edifying. His *Hail Sister!* was not to be lightly thought of. Doubtless he had every help to edification. There were many learned sisters in the convent who knew by heart all the Christmas carols, ancient and modern. Formed under their auspices, our parrot soon equalled his instructors. He acquired even their very tone, giving it all their pious lengthiness, the holy sighs, and languishing cadences, of the singing of the dear sisters, groaning little doves.

The renown of merit like this was not to be confined to a cloister. In all Nevers, from morning till night, nothing was talked of but the darling scenes exhibited by the parrot of the blessed nuns. People came as far as from Moulins to see him. Ver-Vert never budged out of the parlour. Sister Melanie, in her best stomacher, held him, and made the spectators remark his tints, his beauties, his infantine sweetness. The bird sat at the receipt of victory. And yet even these attractions were forgotten when he spoke. Polished, rounded, brimful of the pious gentilities which the younger aspirants had taught him, our illustrious parrot commenced his recitation. Every instant a new charm developed itself; and

what was remarkable, nobody fell asleep. His hearers listened; they hummed, they applauded. He, nevertheless, trained to perfection, and convinced of the nothingness of glory, always withdrew into the recesses of his heart, and triumphed with modesty. Closing his beak, and dropping into a low tone of voice, he bowed himself with sanctity, and so left his world edified. He uttered nothing under a gentility or a dulcitude.

Thus lived, in this delectable nest, like a master, a saint, and a true sage as he was, Father Ver-Vert, dear to more than one Hebe; always loved, and always worthy to be loved; polished, perfumed, cockered up, the very pink of perfection: happy, in short, if he had never travelled.

But now comes the time of miserable memory, the critical minute in which his glory is to be eclipsed. O guilt! O shame! O cruel recollection! Fatal journey, why must we see thy calamities beforehand? Alas! a great name is a perilous thing. Your retired lot is by much the safest. Let this example, my friends, show you that too many talents, and too flattering a success, often bring in their train the ruin of one's virtue.

The renown of thy brilliant achievements, Ver-Vert, spread itself abroad on every side, even as far as Nantes. There, as everybody knows, is another meek fold of the reverend Mothers of the Visitation—ladies who, as elsewhere in this country of ours, are by no means

the last to know everything. To hear of our parrot was to desire to see him; and desire, at all times and in everybody, is a devouring flame.

Behold, then, at one blow, twenty heads turned for a parrot. The ladies of Nantes wrote to Nevers, to beg that this bewitching bird might be allowed to come down to the Loire, and pay them a visit. The letter is sent off; but when, ah, when will come the answer? In something less than a fortnight.

At length the epistle arrives at Nevers. Tremendous event! "What! loose Ver-Vert! O heavens! What are we to do in these desolate holes and corners without the darling bird!"

The fatal moment arrives; everything is ready; courage must be summoned to bid adieu. How many kisses did not Ver-Vert receive on going out? They retain him: they bathe him with tears: his attractions redouble at every step. Nevertheless, he is at length outside the walls; he is gone.

The same vagabond of a boat which contained the sacred bird, contained also a couple of giggling damsels, three dragoons, a wet nurse, a monk, and two garçons; pretty society for a young thing just out of a monastery!

Ver-Vert thought himself in another world. It was no longer text and orisons with which he was treated, but words which he never heard before, and those words none of the most Christian. The dragoons, a race not eminent for devotion, spoke no language but that of the ale-house. All their hymns to beguile the road

were in honour of Bacchus; all their movable feasts consisted only in those of the ordinary. The garçons and the three new Graces kept up a concert in the taste of the allies. The boatmen cursed and swore, and made horrible rhymes; taking care, by a masculine articulation, that not a syllable should lose its vigour. Ver-Vert, melancholy and frightened, sat dumb in a corner. He knew not what to say or think.

In the course of the voyage, the company resolved to "fetch out" our hero. The task fell on Brother Lubin the monk, who put some questions to the handsome forlorn. The benign bird answered in his best manner. He sighed with a formality the most finished, and said in a pedantic tone, "Hail, Sister!" At this "Hail," you may judge whether the hearers shouted with laughter. Every tongue fell on poor Father Parrot.

Our novice bethought within him that he must have spoken amiss. He began to consider, that if he would be well with the fair portion of the company, he must adopt the style of their friends. Being naturally of a daring soul, and having been hitherto well fumed with incense, his modesty was not proof against so much contempt. Ver-Vert lost his patience; and in losing his patience, alas, poor fellow, he lost his innocence. He even began, inwardly, to mutter ungracious curses against the good sisters, his instructors, for not having taught him the true refinements of the French language, its nerve and its delicacy. He accordingly set himself to

learn them with all his might; not speaking much, it is true, but not the less inwardly studying for all that. In two days (such is the progress of evil in young minds) he forgot all that had been taught him, and in less than three was as off-hand a swearer as any in the boat. It has been said that nobody becomes abandoned at once. Ver-Vert scorned the saying. He had a contempt for any more novitiates. He became a blackguard in the twinkling of an eye. In short, on one of the boatmen exclaiming, "Go to the devil," Ver-Vert echoed the wretch! The company applauded, and he swore again. Nay, he swore other oaths. A new vanity seized him; and degrading his generous organ, he now felt no other ambition but that of pleasing the wicked.

Meanwhile, the boat was approaching the town of Nantes, where the new sisters of the Visitation expected it with impatience. The days and nights had never been so long. During all their torments, however, they had the image of the coming angel before them—the polished soul, the bird of noble breeding, the tender, sincere, and edifying voice-behaviour, sentiments—distinguished merit—oh grief! what is it all to come to?

The boat arrives; the passengers disembark. A lay-sister of the turning-box was waiting in the dock, where she had been over and over again at stated times, ever since the letters were dispatched. Her looks, darting over the water, seemed to hasten the vessel that conveyed our

hero. The rascal guessed her business at first sight. Her prudish eyes, letting a look out at the corner, her great coif, white gloves, dying voice, and little pendant cross, were not to be mistaken. Ver-Vert ruffled his feathers with disgust. There is reason to believe that he gave her internally to the devil. He was now all for the army, and could not bear the thought of new ceremonies and litanies. However, my gentleman was obliged to submit. The lay-sister carried him off in spite of his vociferations. They say, he bit her in going; some say in the neck, others in the arm. I believe it is not well known where he bit her; but the circumstance is of no consequence. Off he went. The devotee was soon within the convent, and the visitor's arrival was announced.

At the first sound of the news, the bell was set ringing. They shriek, clap their hands, they fly. "'Tis he, sister! 'Tis he! He is in the great parlour." The great parlour is filled in a twinkling. Even the old nuns, marching in order, forget the weight of their years. The whole house was grown young again. It is said to have been on this occasion that Mother Angelica ran for the first time.

At length the blessed spectacle burst upon the good sisters. They cannot satiate their eyes with admiring: and in truth, the rascal was not the less handsome for being less virtuous. His military look and petit-maitre airs gave him even a new charm. All mouths burst out in his praise; all at once. He, however, does not deign to utter

one pious word, but stands rolling his eyes. Grief the first. There was a scandal in this air of effrontery. In the second place, when the Prioress, with an august air, and like an inward-hearted creature as she was, wished to interchange a few sentiments with the bird, the first words my gentleman uttered—the only answer he condescended to give, and that too with an air of nonchalance, or rather contempt, and like an unfeeling villain, was—“What a pack of fools these nuns are!”

History says he learned these words on the road.

At this début, Sister Augustin, with an air of the greatest sweetness, hoping to make their visitor cautious, said to him, “For shame, my dear brother.” The dear brother, not to be corrected, rhymed her a word or two, too audacious to be repeated.

“Just heaven!” exclaimed the sister; “what a wretch! Is this the divine parrot?”

Ver-Vert, like a reprobate at the gallows, made no other answer than by setting up a dance, and singing with an “Oh, d—mme!”

The nuns would have stopped his mouth; but he was not to be hindered. He gave a buffoon imitation of the prattle of the young sisters; and then shutting his beak, and dropping into a palsied imbecility, mimicked the nasal drawl of his old enemies, the antiques!

But it was still worse, when, tired and worn out with the stale sentences of his reprovers, Ver-Vert foamed and raged like a corsair, thun-

dering out all the terrible words he had learned aboard the vessel. Heavens! how he swore, and what things he said! His dissolute voice knew no bounds. The lower regions themselves appeared to open before them. Words not to be thought of danced upon his beak. The young sisters thought he was talking Hebrew.

In short, Ver-Vert is fairly put in his cage, and sent on his travels back again. They pronounce him detestable, abominable, a condemned criminal. All the convent sign his decree of banishment, but they shed tears in doing it. It was impossible not to pity a reprobate in the flower of his age, who was unfortunate enough to hide such a depraved heart under an exterior so beautiful. For his part, Ver-Vert desired nothing better than to be off. He was carried back to the river side in a box and did not bite the lay-sister again.

But what was the despair, when he returned home, and would fain have given his old instructors a like serenade! Nine venerable sisters, their eyes in tears, their senses confused with horror, their veils two deep, condemned him in full conclave. The younger ones, who might have spoken for him, were not allowed to be present. One or two were for sending him back to the vessel; but the majority resolved upon keeping and chastising him. He was sentenced to two months' abstinence, three of imprisonment, and four of silence.

Covered with shame and instructed by misfortune, our hero at last found himself contrite.

LEIGH HUNT

He forgot the dragoons and the monk, and once more in unison with the holy sisters both in matter and manner, and became more devout than a canon. When they were sure of his conversion, the divan reassembled, and agreed to shorten the term of his penitence. Judge if the day of his deliverance was a day of joy. All his future moments, consecrated to gratitude, were to be spun by the hands of love and security. O faithless pleasure! O vain expectation of mortal delight! All the dormitories were dressed with flowers. Exquisite coffee, songs, lively exercise, an amiable tumult of pleasure, a plenary indulgence of liberty, all breathed of love and delight; nothing announced the coming adversity. But, O indiscreet liberality! O fatal overflowingness of the hearts of nuns! Passing too quickly from abstinence to abundance, from the hard bosom of misfortune to whole seas of sweetness, saturated with sugar and set on fire with liqueurs, Ver-Vert fell one day on a box of sweetmeats, and lay on his deathbed. His roses were all changed to cypress. In vain the sisters endeavoured to recall his fleeting spirit. The sweet excess had hastened his destiny, and the fortunate victim of love expired in the bosom of pleasure.

ANGLING

The book of Isaac Walton upon angling is a delightful performance in some respects. It smells of the country air, and of the flowers in

ESSAYS

cottage windows. Its pictures of rural scenery, its simplicity, its snatches of old songs, are all good and refreshing; and his prodigious relish of a dressed fish would not be grudged him, if he had killed it a little more decently. He really seems to have a respect for a piece of salmon; to approach it, like the grace, with his hat off. But what are we to think of a man, who, in the midst of his tortures of other animals, is always valuing himself on his harmlessness; and who actually follows up one of his most complacent passages of this kind with an injunction to impale a certain worm twice upon a hook, because it is lively and might get off! All that can be said of such an extraordinary inconsistency is, that having been bred up in an opinion of the innocence of his amusement, and possessing a healthy power of exercising voluntary thoughts (as far as he had any), he must have dozed over the opposite side of the question, so as to become almost, perhaps quite, insensible to it. And angling does indeed seem the next thing to dreaming. It dispenses with locomotion, reconciles contradictions, and renders the very countenance null and void. A friend of ours, who is an admirer of Walton, was struck, just as we were, with the likeness of the old angler's face to a fish. It is hard, angular, and of no expression. It seems to have been "subdued to what it worked in"; to have become native to the watery element. One might have said to Walton, "Oh flesh, how art thou fishified!" He

looks like a pike, dressed in broadcloth instead of butter.

Death is common to us all; and a trout, speedily killed by a man, may suffer no worse fate than that from the jaws of a pike. It is the mode, the lingering cat-like cruelty of the angler's sport, that renders it unworthy.

We should like to know what these grave divines, who were anglers, would have said to the heavenly maxim of "Do as you would be done by." Let us imagine ourselves, for instance, a sort of human fish. Air is but a rarer fluid; and at present, in this November weather, a supernatural being who should look down upon us from a higher atmosphere would have some reason to regard us as a kind of pedestrian carp. Now, fancy a Genius fishing for us. Fancy him baiting a great hook with pickled salmon, and twitching up old Isaac Walton from the banks of the river Lea, with the hook through his ear. How he would go up, roaring and screaming, and thinking the devil had got him!

A DAY BY THE FIRE

I am one of those that delight in a fireside, and can enjoy it without even the help of a cat or tea-kettle. To cats, indeed, I have an aversion, as animals that only affect a sociality without caring a jot for anything but their own luxury; and my tea-kettle, I frankly confess, has long been displaced, or rather dismissed, by a bronze-coloured and graceful urn; though, between our-

selves, I am not sure that I have gained anything by the exchange. Cowper, it is true, talks of the "bubbling and loud hissing urn," which "throws up a steady column." But there was something so primitive and unaffected, so warm-hearted and unassuming, in the tea-kettle, its song was so much more cheerful and continued, and it kept water so hot and comfortable as long as you wanted it, that I sometimes feel as if I had sent off a good, plain, faithful old friend, who had but one wish to serve me, for a superficial, smooth-faced upstart of a fellow, who, after a little promising and vapouring, grows cold and contemptuous, and thinks himself bound to do nothing but stand on a rug and have his person admired by the circle. To this admiration, in fact, I have been obliged to resort, in order to make myself think well of my bargain, if possible; and accordingly I say to myself every now and then during the tea, "A pretty look with it, that urn"; or "It's wonderful what a taste the Greeks had"; or "The eye might have a great many enjoyments, if people would look after forms and shapes." In the meanwhile, the urn leaves off its "bubbling and hissing"; but then there is such an air with it! My tea is made of cold water; but then the Greeks were such a nation!

If there is one thing that can reconcile me to the loss of my kettle more than another, it is that my fire is left quite to itself; it has full room to breathe and to blaze, and I can poke

it as I please. What recollections does that idea excite! Poke it as I please! Think, benevolent reader, think of the pride and pleasure of having in your hand that awful, but at the same time artless, weapon, a poker; of putting it into the proper bar, gently levering up the coals, and seeing the instant and bustling flame above. To what can I compare that moment? That sudden empyreal enthusiasm? That fiery expression of vivification? That ardent acknowledgment, as it were, of the care and kindness of the operator? Let me consider a moment; it is very odd: I was always reckoned a lively hand at a simile; but language and combination absolutely fail me here. If it is like anything, it must be something beyond everything in beauty and life! Oh, I have it now! Think, reader, if you are one of those who can muster up sufficient sprightliness to engage in a game of forfeits—on *Twelfth Night*, for instance; think of a blooming girl, who is condemned to “open her mouth and shut her eyes and see what heaven,” in the shape of a mischievous young fellow, “will send her.” Her mouth is opened accordingly, the fire of her eyes is dead, her face assumes a doleful air; up walks the aforesaid heaven or mischievous young fellow (young *Ouranos*, *Hesiod* would have called him), and instead of a piece of paper, a thimble, or a cinder, claps into her mouth a peg of orange, or a long slice of citron; then her eyes above instantly light up again, the smiles wreath about, the sparklings burst forth, and all is warmth, brilliancy, and delight.

I am aware that the simile is not perfect, but if it would do for an epic poem, as I think it might after Virgil's whipping-tops, and Homer's jackasses and black puddings, the reader, perhaps, will not quarrel with it.

But to describe my feelings in an orderly manner, I must request my reader to go with me through a day's enjoyment by the fireside. It is part of my business, as a Reflector, to look about for helps to reflection; and for this reason, among many others, I indulge myself in keeping a good fire from morning till night. I have also a reflective turn for an easy-chair, and a very thinking attachment to comfort in general. But of this as I proceed.

AT BREAKFAST

Imprimis, then: the morning is clear and cold; time, half-past seven; scene, a breakfast-room. Some persons, by-the-by, prefer a thick and rainy morning, with a sobbing wind and the clatter of pattens along the streets: but I confess for my own part, that, being a sedentary person and too apt to sin against the duties of exercise, I have somewhat too sensitive a consciousness of bad weather, and feel a heavy sky go over me like a feather bed, or rather like a huge brush which rubs all my nap the wrong way. I am growing better in this respect, and by the help of a stout walk at noon, and getting, as it were, fairly into a favourite poet, and a warm fire of an evening, begin to manage an east wind

tolerably well; but still, for perfection's sake, on the present occasion, I must insist upon my clear morning, and will add to it, if the reader pleases, a little hoar-frost upon the windows, a bird or two coming after the crumbs, and the light smoke from the early chimneys. Even the dustman's bell is not unpleasant from its association, and there is something absolutely musical in the clash of the milk-pails suddenly unyoked, and the ineffable *ad libitum* note that follows. The waking epicure rises with an elastic anticipation, enjoys the freshening cold water, which endears what is to come; and even goes through the villainous scraping process which we soften down into the level and lawny appellation of shaving. He then hurries downstairs, rubbing his hands, and sawing the sharp air through his teeth; and, as he enters the breakfast-room, sees his old companion glowing through the bars—the life of the apartment—and wanting only his friendly hand to be lightened a little, and enabled to shoot up into dancing brilliancy. I find that I am getting into a quantity of epithets here, and must rein in my enthusiasm. What need I say? The poker is applied, and would be so whether required or not, for it is impossible to resist that sudden ardour inspired by that sight. The use of the poker, on first seeing one's fire, is as natural as shaking hands with a friend. At that movement a hundred little sparks fly up from the coal-dust that falls within, while from the masses themselves a roaring flame mounts aloft, with a deep and fitful sound as of a shaken

ESSAYS

carpet. Epithets again! I must recur to poetry at once:—

*Then shine the bars, the cakes in smoke aspire
A sudden glory bursts from all the fire,
The conscious wight rejoicing in the heat,
Rubs the blithe knees and toasts th' alternate feet.*

The utility as well as beauty of the fire during breakfast need not be pointed out to the most unphlogistic observer. A person would rather be shivering at any time of the day than that of his first rising. The transition would be too unnatural; he is not prepared for it, as Bernadine says when he objects to being hung. If you eat plain bread-and-butter with your tea, it is fit that your moderation should be rewarded with a good blaze; and if you indulge in hot rolls or toast you will hardly keep them to their warmth without it, particularly if you read; and then—if you take in a newspaper—what a delightful change from the wet, raw, dabbling fold of paper when you first touch it to the dry, crackling superficies which, with a skilful sput of the finger-nails at its upper end, stand at once in your hand and looks as if it said, “Come, read me.” Nor is it the look of the newspaper only which the fire must render complete: it is the interest of the ladies who may happen to form part of your family—of your wife in particular, if you have one—to avoid the niggling and pinching aspect of cold: it takes away the harmony of her features, and the grace of her behaviour;

while, on the other hand, there is scarcely any more interesting sight in the world than that of a neat, delicate, good-humoured female, presiding at your breakfast-table, with hands tapering out of her long sleeves, eyes with a touch of Sir Peter Lely in them, and a face set in a little oval frame of muslin tied under the chin, and retaining a certain tinge of the pillow without its cloudiness. This is indeed the finishing grace of a fireside, though it is impossible to have it at all times, and perhaps not always politic—especially for the studious.

DURING THE AFTERNOON

From breakfast to dinner, the quantity and quality of enjoyment depends very much on the nature of one's concerns, and occupation of any kind, if we pursue it properly, will hinder us from paying a critical attention to the fireside. It is sufficient if our employments do not take us away from it, or at least from the genial warmth of a room which it adorns—unless, indeed, we are enabled to have resource to exercise; and in that case I am not so unjust as to deny that walking or riding has its merits, and that the genial glow they diffuse throughout the frame has something in it extremely pleasurable and encouraging. Nay, I must not scruple to confess that, without some preparation of this kind, the enjoyment of the fireside, humanly speaking, is not absolutely perfect; as I have latterly been convinced by a variety of incon-

testable arguments in the shape of headaches, rheumatisms, mote-painted eyes, and the other logical appeals of one's feelings, which are in great use with physicians. Supposing, therefore, the morning to be passed and the due portion of exercise to have been taken, the fireside fixes rather an early hour for dinner, particularly in the winter time, for he has not only been early at breakfast, but there are two luxurious intervals to enjoy between dinner and the time of candles: one that supposes a party round the fire with wine and fruit; the other, the hour of twilight, of which it has been reasonably doubted whether it is not the most luxurious point of time which a fireside can present. But opinions will naturally be divided on this as on all other subjects, and every degree of pleasure depends upon so many contingencies and such a variety of associations induced by habit and opinion, that I should be as unwilling as I am unable to decide on the matter. This, however, is certain, that no true firesider can dislike an hour so composing to his thoughts and so cherishing to his whole faculties: and it is equally certain that he will be little inclined to protract the dinner beyond what he can help, for if ever a fireside becomes unpleasant, it is during the gross and pernicious prolongation of eating and drinking to which this latter age has given itself up, and which threatens to make the rising generation regard a meal of repletion as the ultimatum of enjoyment. The inconvenience to which I allude is owing to the way in which we sit at dinner;

for the persons who have their backs to the fire are liable to be scorched, while at the same time they render the persons opposite them liable to be frozen; so that the fire becomes uncomfortable to the former, and tantalizing to the latter. And thus three evils are produced, of a most absurd and scandalous nature: in the first place, the fireside loses a degree of its character and awakens feeling the very reverse of what it should; secondly, the position of the back towards it is a neglect and affront, which it becomes to resent; and, finally, its beauties, its proffered kindness, and its sprightly social effect are at once cut off from the company by the interposition of those invidious and idle surfaces called screens. This abuse is the more ridiculous inasmuch as the remedy is so easy; for, we have nothing to do but to use semi-circular dining-tables, with the base unoccupied towards the fireplace, and the whole annoyance vanishes at once; the master or mistress might preside in the middle, as was the custom with the Romans, and thus propriety would be observed, while everybody had the sight and benefit of the fire: not to mention that, by this fashion, the table might be brought nearer to it; that the servants would have better access to the dishes; and that screens, if at all necessary, might be turned to better purpose as a general enclosure instead of a separation. But I hasten from dinner, according to notice; and cannot but observe that, if you have a small set of visitors who enter into your feelings on this head, there is no movement

so pleasant as a general one from the table to the fireside, each person taking his glass with him, and a small, slim-legged table being introduced into the circle for the purpose of holding the wine, and perhaps a poet or two, a glee-book, or a lute. If this practice should become general among those who know how to enjoy luxuries in such temperance as not to destroy conversation, it would soon gain for us another social advantage, by putting an end to the barbarous custom of sending away the ladies after dinner—a gross violation of those chivalrous graces of life for which modern times are so highly indebted to the persons whom they are pleased to term Gothic. And here I might digress, with no great impropriety, to show the snug notions that were entertained by the knights and damsels of old in all particulars relating to domestic enjoyment, especially in the article of mixed company; but I must not quit the fireside, and will observe that, as the ladies formed its chief ornament, so they constituted its most familiar delight.

AT TWILIGHT

But twilight comes; and the lover of the fireside, for the perfection of the moment, is now alone. He was reading a minute or two ago, and for some time was unconscious of the increasing dusk till, on looking up, he perceived the objects out of doors deepening into massy outline, while the sides of his fireplace began to

reflect the light of the flames, and the shadow of himself and his chair fidgeted with huge obscurity on the wall. Still wishing to read he pushed himself nearer and nearer to the window, and continued fixed on his book till he happened to take another glance out of doors, and on returning to it could make out nothing. He therefore lays it aside, and restoring his chair to the fireplace, seats himself right before it in a reclining posture, his feet apart upon the fender, his eyes bent down towards the grate, his arms on the chair's elbows, one hand hanging down, and the palm of the other turned up and presented to the fire—not to keep it from him, for there is no glare or scorch about it—but to intercept, and have a more kindly feel of its genial warmth. It is thus that the greatest and wisest of mankind have sat and meditated: a homely truism, perhaps, but such a one as we are apt enough to forget. We talk of going to Athens or Rome to see the precise objects which the Greeks and Romans beheld, and forget that the moon, which may be looking upon us at the moment is the same identical planet that enchanted Homer and Virgil, and that has been contemplated and admired by all the great men and geniuses that have existed: by Socrates and Plato in Athens, by the Antonines in Rome, by the Alfreds, the Miltons, Newtons, and Shakespeares. In like manner, we are anxious to discover how those great men and poets appeared in common; what habits they loved, in what way they talked and

ESSAYS

meditated, nay, in what postures they delighted to sit, and whether they indulged in the same tricks and little comforts that we do. Look at Nature, and their works, and we shall see that they did; and that when we act naturally and think earnestly, we are reflecting their common habits to the life. Thus we have seen Horace talking of his blazing hearth and snug accommodations like the jolliest of our acquaintances; and thus we may safely imagine that Milton was in some such attitude as I have described, when he sketched that enchanting little picture which beats all the cabinet portraits that have been produced:—

*Or if the air will not permit,
Some still removed place will fit,
Where glowing embers through the room
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom,
Far from all resort of mirth,
Save the cricket on the hearth,
Or the bellman's drowsy charm
To bless the doors from nightly harm.*

But to attend to our fireside. The evening is beginning to gather in. The window, which presents a large face of watery grey, intersected by strong lines, is perceptibly becoming darker, and as that becomes darker the fire assumes a more glowing presence. The contemplatist keeps his easy posture, absorbed in his fancies, and everything around him is still and serene. The stillness would even ferment in his ear, and whisper as it were of what the air contained; but a minute coil, just sufficient to hinder that

busier silence, clicks in the baking coal; while every now and then the light ashes shed themselves below, or a stronger but still gentle flame flutters up with a gleam over the chimney. At length the darker objects in the room become mingled; the gleam of the fire strikes with a restless light the edges of the furniture, and reflects itself in the blackening window; while his feet take a gentle move on the fender, and then settle again, and his face comes out of the general darkness, earnest even in indolence, and pale even in the very ruddiness of what it looks upon. This is the only time, perhaps, at which sheer idleness is salutary and refreshing. How observed with the smallest effort is every trick and aspect of the fire! A coal falling in—a fluttering fume—a miniature mockery of a flash of lightning—nothing escapes the eye and the imagination. Sometimes a little flame appears at the corner of the grate like a quivering spangle; sometimes it swells out at top into a restless and brief lambency; anon it is seen only by a light beneath the grate, or it curls round the bars like a tongue, or darts out with a spiral thinness and a sulphurous and continued puffing as from a reed. The glowing coals meantime exhibit the shifting form of hills, and valleys, and gulfs; of fiery Alps, whose heat is uninhabitable even by spirit; or of black precipices from which sweet fairies seem about to spring away on sable wings: then heat and fire are forgotten, and walled towns appear, and figures of unknown animals, and far distant countries

ESSAYS

scarcely to be reached by human journey: then coaches and camels, and barking dogs as large as either, and forms that combine every shape and suggest every fancy: till at last the ragged coals tumbling together reduce the vision to chaos, and the huge profile of gaunt and grinning face seems to make a jest of all that has passed. During these creations of the eye, the thought roves about in a hundred abstractions; some of them suggested by the fire, some of them suggested by that suggestion, some of them arising from the general sensation of comfort and composure, contrasted with whatever the world affords of evil or dignified by high-wrought meditations on whatever gives hope to benevolence and inspiration to wisdom. The philosopher at such moments plans his Utopian schemes and dreams of happy certainties which he cannot prove; the lover, happier and more certain, fancies his mistress with him unobserved and confiding, his arm round her waist, her head upon his shoulder, and earth and heaven contained in that sweet possession, the Poet, thoughtful as the one, and ardent as the other, springs off at once above the world, treads every turn of the harmonious spheres, darts up with gleaming wings through the sunshine of a thousand systems, and stops not till he has found a perfect Paradise, whose fields are of young roses and whose air is music, whose waters are the liquid diamond, whose light is as radiance through crystal, whose dwellings are laurel bowers, whose language is

poetry, whose inhabitants are congenial souls; and to enter the very verge of whose atmosphere strikes beauty on the face and felicity on the heart. Alas! that flights so lofty should ever be connected with earth by threads as slender as they are long, and that the least twitch of the most commonplace hand should be able to snatch down the viewless wanderer to existing comforts. The entrance of a single candle dissipates at once the twilight and the sunshine, and the ambitious dreamer is summoned to his tea!

*Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtain, wheel the sofa round,
And while the bubbling and loud hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups
That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful evening in.*

Never was snug hour more feelingly commenced. Cowper was not a *great* poet; his range was neither wide nor lofty; but such as it was he had it completely to himself; he is the poet of quiet life and familiar observation. The fire, we see, is now stirred, and becomes very different from the one we have just left; it puts on its liveliest aspect in order to welcome those to whom the tea-table is a point of meeting; and it is the business of the firesider to cherish the aspect for the remainder of the evening. How light and easy the coals look! How ardent is the roominess within the bars! How airily do the volumes of smoke course each other up the chimney, like so many fantastic and indefinite

ESSAYS

spirits, while the eye in vain endeavours to accompany any one of them. The flames are not so fierce as in the morning, but still they are active and powerful; and if they do not roar up the chimney, they make a constant and playful noise that is extremely to the purpose. Here they come out at top with a leafy swirl; there they dart up spirally and at once; there they form a lambent assemblage that shifts about on its own ground, and is continually losing and regaining its vanishing members. I confess I take particular delight in seeing a good blaze at top, and my impatience to produce it will sometimes lead me into great rashness in the article of poking—that is to say, I use the poker at the top instead of the middle of the fire, and go probing it about in search of a flame. A lady of my acquaintance, “near and dear,” as they say in Parliament, will tell me of this fault twenty times in a day, and every time so good-humouredly that it is mere want of generosity in me not to amend it; but somehow or other I do not. The consequence is, that after a momentary ebullition of blaze, the fire becomes dark and sleepy and is in danger of going out. It is like a boy at school in the hands of a bad master, who, thinking him dull, and being impatient to render him brilliant, beats him about the head and ears till he produces the very evil he would prevent. But on the present occasion I forbear to use the poker; there is no need of it: everything is comfortable, everything snug and sufficient.

WITH TEA OR COFFEE

How equable is the warmth around us! How cherishing this rug to one's feet! How complacent the cup at one's lip! What a fine broad light is diffused from the fire over the circle gleaming in the urn, and the polished mahogany, bringing out the white garments of the ladies and giving a poetic warmth to their face and hair! I need not mention all the good things that are said at tea, still less the gallant. Good-humour never has an audience more disposed to think it wit, nor gallantry and hour of service more blameless and elegant. Ever since tea has been known, its clear and gentle powers of inspiration have been acknowledged, from Waller paying his court at the circle of Catherine of Braganza to Dr. Johnson receiving homage at the parties of Mrs. Thrale; the former, in his lines upon "hearing it commended by her Majesty," ranks it at once above myrtle and laurel, and her Majesty of course agreed with him:—

*Venus her myrtle, Phœbus has his bays :
Tea both excels, which she vouchsafes to praise,
The best of Queens and best of Herbs we owe
To that bold nation, which the way did show
To the fair region where the sun does rise,
Whose rich productions we so justly prize.
The Muse's friend, Tea, does our fancy aid :
Repress those vapours which the head invade,
And keeps that palace of the soul serene,
Fit, on her birthday, to salute the Queen.*

The eulogies pronounced on his favourite

ESSAYS

beverage by Dr. Johnson are too well known to be repeated here, and the commendatory description of the Emperor Kien Lung, to a European taste at least, is somewhat too dull, unless his Majesty's teapot has been shamefully translated. For my own part, though I have the highest respect, as I have already shown, for this genial drink, which is warm to the cold, and cooling to the warm, I confess, as Montaigne would have said, that I prefer coffee, particularly in my political capacity:—

*Coffee that makes the politicians wise
To see through all things with his half-shut eyes.*

There is something in it, I think, more lively and at the same time more substantial. Besides, I never see it but it reminds me of the Turks, and their Arabian tales, an association infinitely preferable to any Chinese ideas; and, like the king who put his head into the tub, I am transported to distant lands the moment I dip into the coffee-cup; at one moment ranging the valleys with Sinbad; at another, encountering fairies on the wing by moonlight; at a third, exploring the haunts of the cursed Maugraby, or rapt into the silence of that delicious solitude from which Prince Agib was carried by the fatal horse. Then, if I wish to poetize upon it at home, there is Belinda with her sylphs, drinking it in such state as nothing but poetry can supply:—

*For lo the board with cups and spoons are crowned,
The berries crackle, and the mill turns round;
On shining altars of Japan they raise*

LEIGH HUNT

*The silver lamp; the fiery spirits blaze;
From silver spouts the grateful liquors glide :
And China's earth receives the smoking tide.
At once they gratify the scent and taste,
And frequent cups prolong the rich repast :
Straight hover round the fair her airy band;
Some, as she sipped the fuming liquor, fanned :
Some o'er her lap the careful plumes displayed,
Trembling, and conscious of the rich brocade.*

It must be acknowledged, however, that the general association of ideas is at present in favour of tea, which on that account has the advantage of suggesting no confinement to particular ranks or modes of life. Let there be but a fireside, and anybody, of any denomination, may be fancied enjoying the luxury of a cup of tea—from the duchess in the evening drawing-room, who makes it the instrument of displaying her white hand, to the washerwoman at her early tub, who, having had nothing to signify since five, sits down to it, with her shining arms and corrugated fingers, at six. If there is any one station of life in which it is enjoyed to most advantage, it is that of mediocrity—that in which all comfort is reckoned to be best appreciated, because, while there is taste to enjoy, there is necessity to earn the enjoyment.

UNTIL BEDTIME

There are so many modes of spending the remainder of the evening between teatime and bedtime (for I protest against all suppers that

are not light enough to be taken on the knee), that a general description would avail me nothing, and I cannot be expected to enter into such a variety of particulars. Suffice it to say, that where the fire is duly appreciated and the circle good-humoured, none of them can be unpleasant, whether the party be large or small, young or old, talkative or contemplative. If there is music, a good fire will be particularly grateful to the performers, who are often seated at the further end of the room: for it is really shameful that a lady who is charming us all with her voice, or firing us, at the harp or piano, with the lightning of her fingers should, at the very moment, be trembling with cold. As to cards, which were invented for the solace of a mad prince, and which are only tolerable, in my opinion, when we can be as mad as he was—that is to say, at a round game—I cannot by any means patronize them, as a conscientious firesider; not to mention all the other objections, the card-table is as awkward in a fireside point of view as the dinner-table, and it is not to be compared with it for sociality. If it be necessary to pay so ill a compliment to the company as to have recourse to some amusement of this kind, there is chess or draughts, which may be played upon a tablet by the fire; but nothing is like discourse, freely uttering the fancy as it comes, and varied perhaps with a little music, or with the perusal of some favourite passages which excite the comments of the circle. It is then, if tastes happen to be accordant, and the social voice is frank

as well as refined, that the "sweet music of speech" is heard in its best harmony, differing only for apter sweetness, and mingling but for happiest participation, while the mutual sense smilingly blends in with every rising measure,

And female stop smothers the charm o'er all.

This is finished evening: this the quickener at once and the calmer of tired thought: this the spot where our better spirits await to exalt and enliven us, when the daily and vulgar ones have discharged their duty.

Bright fires and joyous faces: and it is no easy thing for philosophy to say good-night; but health must be enjoyed, or nothing will be enjoyed; and the charm should be broken at a reasonable hour. Far be it, however, from a rational firesider not to make exceptions to the rule, when friends have been long usunder, or when some domestic celebration has called them together, or even when hours peculiarly congenial render it difficult to part. At all events, the departure must be a voluntary matter; and here I cannot help exclaiming against the gross and villanous trick which some people have when they wish to get rid of their company of letting their fires go down, and the snuffs of their candles run to seed: it is paltry and palpable, and argues bad policy as well as breeding, for such of their friends as have a different feeling of things may chance to be disgusted with them altogether, while the careless or unpolite may

choose to revenge themselves on the appeal, and face it out gravely till the morning. If a common visitor be inconsiderate enough on an ordinary occasion to sit beyond all reasonable hours, it must be reckoned as a fatality—as an ignorance of men and things, against which you cannot possibly provide—as a sort of visitation, which must be borne with patience, and which is not likely to occur often, if you know whom you invite, and those who are invited know you. But with an occasional excess of the fireside what social virtue will quarrel? A single friend, perhaps, loiters behind the rest; you are alone in the house, you have just got upon a subject delightful to you both; the fire is of a candent brightness, the wind howls out of doors; the rain beats; the cold is piercing! Sit down! This is a time when the most melancholy temperament may defy the clouds and storms, and even extract from them a pleasure that will take no substance by daylight. The ghost of his happiness sits by him and puts in the likeness of former hours; and if such a man can be made comfortable by the moment, what enjoyment may it not furnish to an unclouded spirit? If the excess belong not to vice, temperance does not forbid it when it only grows out of occasion.

Even when left alone, there is sometimes a charm in watching out the decaying fire; in getting closer and closer to it with tilted chair, and knees against the bars, and letting the whole multitude of fancies that work in the night silence come whispering about the yielding

faculties. The world around is silent: and for a moment the very cares of day seem to have gone with it to sleep, leaving you to snatch a waking sense of disenthralment, and to commune with a thousand airy visitants that come to play with innocent thoughts. Then, for imagination's sake, not for superstition's, are recalled the stories of the secret world, and the midnight pranks of Fairyism; the fancy roams out of doors after rustics led astray by the jack-o'-lantern, or minute laughings heard upon the wind, or the night spirit on his horse that comes flouncing through the air on his way to a surfeited citizen, or the tiny morris-dance that springs up in the watery glimpses of the moon; or, keeping at home, it finds a spirit in every room, peeping at it as it opens the door, while a cry is heard from upstairs announcing the azure marks inflicted by

The nips of fairies upon maids' white hips;

or, hearing a snoring from below, it tiptoes down into the kitchen, and beholds where

*Lies him down the lubber fiend,
And stretched out all the chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength.*

Presently the whole band of fairies, ancient and modern; the demons, sylphs, gnomes, sprites, elves, peris, genii, and above all the fairies of the fireside, the salamanders, loblye-by-the-fires, lars, lemures and larvæ, come flitting between the fancy's eye and the dying coals; some with their weapons and lights; others with grave steadfast-

ness on book or dish; others, of the softer kind, with their arch locks and their conscious pretence of attitude, while a minute music tinkles in the ear, and Oberon gives his gentle order :

*Through this house in glimmering light,
By the dead and drowsy fire,
Ever elf and fairy sprite
Hop as light as bird from briar :
And the ditty, after me
Sing and dance it trippingly.*

Anon the whole is vanished, and the dreamer turning his eye down aside, almost looks for a laughing sprite gazing at him from a tiny chair, and mimicking his face and attitude. Idle fancies these, and incomprehensible to minds clogged with every-day earthliness, but not useless either as an exercise of the invention, or even as adding consciousness to the range and destiny of the soul. They will occupy us too, and steal us away from ourselves, when other recollections fail us or grow painful, when friends are found selfish, or better friends can but commiserate, or when the world has nothing in it to compare with what we have missed out of it. They may even lead us to higher and more solemn meditation, till we work up our way beyond the clinging and heavy atmosphere of this earthly sojourn, and look abroad upon the light that knows neither blemish nor bound, while our ears are saluted, at that egress, by the harmony of the skies. And our eyes behold the lost and congenial spirits that we have loved hastening to welcome us with their sparkling

eyes, and their curls that are ripe with sunshine.

But earth recalls us again; the last flame is out, the fading embers tinkle with a gaping dreariness, and the chill reminds us where we should be. Another gaze on the hearth that has so cheered us, and the last lingering action is to wind up the watch for the next day.

Upon how many anxieties shall the finger of that brief chronicler strike, and upon how many comforts too! To-morrow our fire shall be trimmed anew; and so, gentle reader, good-night; may the weariness I have caused you make sleep the pleasanter.

OF STICKS

Among other comparative injuries which we are accustomed to do to the characters of things animate and inanimate, in order to gratify our human vanity—such as calling a rascal a dog (which is a great compliment), and saying that a tyrant makes a beast of himself (which it would be a very good thing, and a lift in the world, if he could), is a habit, in which some persons indulge themselves, of calling insipid things and persons “sticks.” Such and such a one is said to write a stick; and such another is himself called a stick—a poor stick, a mere stick, a stick of a fellow.

We protest against this injustice done to those genteel, jaunty, useful, and once flourishing sons of a good old stock. Take, for instance, a common cherry-stick, which is one of the favourite

sort. In the first place, it is a very pleasant substance to look at, the grain running round it in glossy and shadowy rings. Then it is of primeval antiquity, handed down from scion to scion through the most flourishing of genealogical trees. In the third place, it is of Eastern origin; of a stock, which it is possible may have furnished Haroun al Raschid with a djereed, or Mohammed with a camel-stick, or Xenophon in his famous retreat with fences, or Xerxes with tent-pins, or Alexander with a javelin, or Sardanapalus with tarts, or Solomon with a simile for his mistress's lips, or Jacob with a crook, or Methuselah with shadow, or Zoroaster with mathematical instruments, or the builders of Babel with scaffolding. Lastly, how do you know but that you may have eaten cherries off this very stick? for it was once alive with sap, and rustling with foliage, and powdered with blossoms, and red and laughing with fruit. Where the leathern tassel now hangs, may have dangled a bunch of berries; and instead of the brass ferule poking in the mud, the tip was growing into the air with its youngest green.

The use of sticks in general is of the very greatest antiquity. It is impossible to conceive a state of society in which boughs should not be plucked from trees for some purpose of utility or amusement. Savages use clubs, hunters require lances, and shepherds their crooks. Then came the sceptre, which is originally nothing but a staff, or a lance, or a crook, distinguished from others. The Greek word for sceptre signi-

fies also a walking-stick. A mace, however plumped up and disguised with gilding and a heavy crown, is only the same thing in the hands of an inferior ruler; and so are all other sticks used in office, from the bâton of the Grand Constable of France down to the tipstaff of a constable in Bow Street. As the shepherd's dog is the origin of the gentlest whelp that lies on a hearth cushion, and of the most pompous barker that jumps about a pair of greys, so the merest stick used by a modern Arcadian, when he is driving his flock to Leadenhall Market with a piece of candle in his hat and No. 554 on his arm, is the first great parent and original of all authoritative staves, from the beadle's cane wherewith he terrifies charity-boys who eat bullseyes in churchtime, up to the silver mace of the verger; the wands of parishes and governors; the tasselled staff wherewith the band-major so loftily picks out his measured way before the musicians, and which he holds up when they are to cease; the white staff of the Lord Treasurer; the Court-officer emphatically called the Lord Gold Stick; the bishop's crozier (*Pedum Episcopale*), whereby he is supposed to pull back the feet of his straying flock; and the royal and imperial sceptre aforesaid, whose holders, formerly called shepherds of the people, were seditiously said to fleece more than to protect. The vaulting-staff, a luxurious instrument of exercise, must have been used in times immemorial for passing streams and rough ground with. It is the ancestor of the staff with

ESSAYS

which pilgrims travelled. The staff and quarter-staff of the country Robin Hoods is a remnant of the war-club. So is the Irish shillelah, which a friend has well defined to be "a stick with two butt-ends." The originals of all these, that are not extant in our own country, may still be seen wherever there are nations uncivilized. The Negro prince, who asked our countrymen what was said of him in Europe, was surrounded in state with a parcel of ragged fellows with shillelahs over their shoulders—Lord Old Sticks.

But sticks have been great favourites with civilized as well as uncivilized nations; only the former have used them more for help and ornament. The Greeks were a sceptropherous people. Homer probably used a walking-stick, because he was blind; but we have it on authority that Socrates did. On his first meeting with Xenophon, which was in a narrow passage, he barred up the way with his stick, and asked him, in his good-natured manner, where provisions were to be had. Xenophon having told him, he asked again, if he knew where virtue and wisdom were to be had; and this reducing the young man to a nonplus, he said, "Follow me, and learn"; which Xenophon did, and became the great man we have all heard of. The fatherly story of Agesilaus, who was caught amusing his little boy with riding on a stick, and asked his visitor whether *he* was a father, is too well known for repetition.

There is an illustrious anecdote connected with our subject in Roman history. The highest

compliment which his countrymen thought they could pay to the first Scipio was to call him a walking-stick; for such is the signification of his name. It was given him for the filial zeal with which he used to help his old father about, serving his decrepit age instead of a staff. But the Romans were not remarkable for sentiment. What we hear in general of their sticks, is the thumpings which servants get in their plays; and above all, the famous rods which the lictors carried, and which, being actual sticks, must have inflicted horrible dull bruises and malignant stripes. They were pretty things, it must be confessed, to carry before the chief magistrate; just as if the King or the Lord Chancellor were to be preceded by a cat-o'-nine-tails.

Sticks are not at all in such request with modern times as they were. Formerly, we suspect most of the poorer ranks in England used to carry them, both on account of the prevalence of manly sports, and for security in travelling: for before the invention of posts and mail-coaches, a trip to Marlow or St. Albans was a thing to make a man write his will. As they came to be ornamented, fashion adopted them. The Cavaliers of Charles I.'s time were a sticked race as well as the apostolic divines and Puritans, who appear to have carried staves because they read of them among the patriarchs. Charles I., when at his trial, held out his stick to forbid the Attorney-General's proceeding. There is an interesting little story connected with a stick, which is related of Andrew Marvell's father

(worthy of such a son), and which, as it is little known, we will repeat; though it respects the man more than the machine. He had been visited by a young lady, who, in spite of a stormy evening, persisted in returning across the Humber, because her family would be alarmed at her absence. The old gentleman, high-hearted and cheerful, after vainly trying to dissuade her from perils which he understood better than she, resolved in his gallantry to bear her company. He accordingly walked with her down to the shore, and, getting into the boat, threw his stick to a friend, with a request, in a lively tone of voice, that he would preserve it for a keep-sake. He then cried out merrily, "Ho-hoy for heaven!" and put off with his visitor. They were drowned.

As commerce increased, exotic sticks grew in request from the Indies. Hence the Bamboo; the Whanghee; the Jambée, which makes such a genteel figure under Mr. Lilly's auspices in the *Tatler*; and our light modern cane, which the Sunday stroller buys at sixpence apiece, with a twist of it at the end for a handle. The physicians, till within the last few score of years, retained, among other fopperies which they converted into gravities, the wig and gold-headed cane. The latter had been an indispensable sign-royal of fashion, and was turned to infinite purposes of accomplished gesticulation. One of the most courtly personages in the "Rape of the Lock" is—

Sir Plume, of amber snuff-box justly vain,

And the nice conduct of a clouded cane.

Sir Richard Steele, as we have before noticed, is reproached by a busybody of those times for a habit of jerking his stick against the pavement as he walked. When swords were abolished by Act of Parliament, the tavern-boys took to pinking each other, as injuriously as they could well manage with their walking-sticks. Macklin the player was tried for his life for poking a man's eye out in this way. Perhaps this helped to bring the stick into disrepute, for the use of it seems to have declined more and more, till it is now confined to old men, and a few among the younger. It is unsuitable to our money-getting mode of rushing hither and thither. Instead of pinking a man's ribs or so, or thrusting out his eye from an excess of the jovial, we break his heart with a bankruptcy.

Canes became so common before the decline of the use of sticks, that whenever a man is beaten with a stick, let it be of what sort it may, it is still common to say that he has had "a caning." Which reminds us of an anecdote more agreeable than surprising; though the patient doubtless thought the reverse. A gentleman, who was remarkable for the amenity of his manners, accompanied by something which a bully might certainly think he might presume upon, found himself compelled to address a person who did not know how to "translate his style," in the following words, which were all delivered in the sweetest tone in the world, with an air of utmost hushing gentility:—"Sir, I am extremely sorry

—to be obliged to say,—that you appear to have a very erroneous notion of the manners that become your situation in life;—and I am compelled, with great reluctance, to add,”—(here he became still softer and more delicate,)—“that if you do not think fit, upon reflection, to alter this very extraordinary conduct towards a gentleman, I shall be under the necessity of—caning you.” The other treated the thing as a joke; and, to the delight of the bystanders, received a very grave drubbing.

There are two eminent threats connected with caning in the history of Dr. Johnson. One was from himself, when he was told that Foote intended to mimic him on the stage. He replied, that if “the dog” ventured to play his tricks with him, he would step out of the stage-box, chastise him before the audience, and then throw himself upon their candour and common sympathy. Foote desisted, as he had good reason to do. The Doctor would have read him a stout lesson, and then made a speech to the audience as forcible; so that the theatrical annals have to regret that the subject and Foote’s shoulders were not afforded him to expatiate upon. It would have been a fine involuntary piece of acting—the part of Scipio by Dr. Johnson. The other threat was against the Doctor himself from Macpherson, the compounder of Ossian. It was for denying the authenticity of that work; a provocation the more annoying, inasmuch as he did not seem duly sensible of its merits. Johnson replied to Macpherson’s letter by one of con-

temptuous brevity and pith; and contented himself with carrying about a large stick with which he intended to repel Macpherson in case of an assault. Had they met, it would have been like "two clouds over the Caspian"; for both were large-built men.

We recollect another bacular Johnsonian anecdote. When he was travelling in Scotland, he lost a huge stick of his in the little treeless island of Mull. Boswell told him he would recover it; but the Doctor shook his head. "No, no," said he; "let anybody in Mull get possession of it, and it will never be restored. Consider, sir, the value of such a piece of timber here."

The most venerable sticks now surviving are the smooth amber-coloured canes in the possession of old ladies. They have sometimes a gold head, but oftener a crook of ivory. But they have latterly been much displaced by light umbrellas, the handles of which are imitations of them; and these are gradually retreating before the young parasol, especially about town.

That sticks, however, are not to be despised by the leisurely, any one who has known what it is to want words, or to slice off the head of a thistle, will allow. The utility of the stick seems divisible into three heads. First, to give a general consciousness of power; second, which may be called a part of the first, to help the demeanour; and third, which may be called a part of the second, to assist a man over the gaps of speech,—the little awkward intervals, called want of ideas.

Deprive a man of his stick who is accustomed to carry one, and with what a diminished sense of vigour and gracefulness he issues out of his house! Wanting his stick, he wants himself. His self-possession, like Acres's on the duel-ground, has gone out at his fingers' ends. But restore it him, and how he resumes his energy! If a common walking-stick, he cherishes the top of it with his fingers, putting them out and back again with a fresh desire to feel it in his palm! How he strikes it against the ground, and feels power come back to his arm! How he makes the pavement ring with the ferrule, if in a street; or decapitates the downy thistles aforesaid, if in a field! Then, if it be a switch, how firmly he jerks his step at the first infliction of it on the air! How he quivers the point of it as he goes, holding the handle with a straight-dropped arm and a tight grasp! How his foot keeps time to the switches! How the passengers think he is going to ride, whether he is or not! How he twigs the luckless pieces of lilac or other shrubs, that peep out of a garden railing! And if a sneaking-looking dog is coming by, how he longs to exercise his despotism and his moral sense at once, by giving him an invigorating twinge!

But what would certain men of address do without their cane or switch? There is an undoubted rhabdosophy, sceptrosophy, or wisdom of the stick, besides the famous divining-rod with which people used to discover treasures and fountains. It supplies a man with inaudible remarks, and an inexpressible number of graces.

Sometimes, breathing between his teeth, he will twirl the end of it upon his stretched-out toe; and this means, that he has an infinite number of easy and powerful things to say, if he had a mind. Sometimes he holds it upright between his knees, and tattoos it against his teeth or under-lip; which implies that he meditates coolly. On other occasions, he switches the side of his boot with it, which announces jauntiness in general. Lastly, if he has not a bon-mot ready in answer to one, he has only to thrust his stick at your ribs, and say, "Ah! you rogue!"—which sets him above you in an instant, as a sort of patronizing wit, who can dispense with the necessity of joking.

At the same time, to give it its due zest in life, a stick has its inconveniences. If you have yellow gloves on, and drop it in the mud, a too hasty recovery is awkward. To have it stick between the stones of a pavement is not pleasant; especially if it snap the ferrule off; or more especially if an old gentleman or lady is coming behind you, and, after making them start back with winking eyes, it threatens to trip them up. To lose the ferrule on a country road, renders the end liable to the growth of a sordid brush; which, not having a knife with you, or a shop in which to borrow one, goes pounding the wet up against your legs. In a crowded street, you may have the stick driven into a large pane of glass; upon which an unthinking tradesman, utterly indifferent to a chain of events, issues forth, and demands twelve shillings and six-

pence. But perhaps we have been anticipated on these points by that useful regulator of the philosophy of every-day matters, who wrote a treatise entitled "The Miseries of Human Life." We shall only add, that the stick is never more in the way than when you meet two ladies, your friends, whose arms you are equally bound and beatified to take. Now is the time, if the fortunate sceptrosopher wishes to be thought well of in a fair bosom. He throws away the stick. The lady smiles and deprecates, and thinks how generously he could protect her without a stick.

It was thus that Sir Walter Raleigh, when he was an aspirant at Elizabeth's Court at Greenwich, attending her one day on a walk, in company with other fine spirits of that age, and coming upon a plashy strip of ground which put her Majesty's princely foot to a nonplus, no sooner saw her dilemma than he took off a gallant velvet cloak which he had about him, and throwing it across the mud and dirt, made such a passage for her to go over as her royal womanhood never forgot.

A HUMAN ANIMAL, AND THE OTHER EXTREME

We met the other day with the description of an animal of quality, in a Biographical Dictionary that was published in the year 1767, and which is one of the most amusing and spirited publications of the kind that we remember to have seen. The writer does not give his author-

ity for this particular memoir [of the Hon. William Hastings], so that it was probably furnished from his own knowledge; but that the account is a true one, is evident. Indeed, with the exception of one or two eccentricities of prudence which rather lean to the side of an excess of instinct, it is but an individual description referring to a numerous class of the same nature that once flourished with horn and hound in this country, and specimens of which are no doubt to be found here and there still, especially towards the north. The title we put at the head is not quite correct and exclusive enough as a definition; since, properly speaking, we lords of the creation are all human animals; but the mere animal, or living and breathing, faculty is united in us more or less with intellect and sentiment; and of these refinements of the perception, few bipeds that have arrived at the dignity of a coat and boots have partaken so little as the noble squire before us.

It is very clear that this worthy personage was nothing more than a kind of beaver or badger in human shape. We imagine him haunting the neighbourhood in which he lived like a pet creature, who had acquired a certain Egyptian godship among the natives; now hunting for his fish, now for his flesh, now fawning after his uncouth fashion upon a pretty girl, and now snarling and contesting a point with his cats. We imagine him the animal principle personified; a symbol on horseback; a jolly dog sitting

ESSAYS

upright at dinner, like a hieroglyphic on a pedestal.

Buffon has a subtle answer to those who argue for the rationality of bees. He says, that the extreme order of their proceedings, and the undeviating apparent forethought with which they even anticipate and provide for a certain geometrical necessity in a part of the structure of their hives, are only additional proofs of the force of instinct. They have an instinct for the order, and an instinct for the anticipation; and they prove that it is not reason, by never striking out anything new or different. The same thing is observable in our human animal. What would be reason or choice in another man, is justly to be set down in him to poverty of ideas. If Tasso had been asked the reason of his always wearing black, he would probably have surprised the inquirer by a series of quaint and deep observations on colour, and dignity, and melancholy, and the darkness of his fate; but if Petrarch or Boccaccio had discussed the matter with him, he might have changed it to purple. A lady, in the same manner, wears black, because it suits her complexion, or is elegant at all times, or because it is at once piquant and superior. But in spring she may choose to put on the colours of the season, and in summer to be gaudier with the butterfly. Our squire had an instinct towards the colour of green, because he saw it about him. He took it from what he lived in, like a chameleon, and never changed it, because he could live in no other sphere. We see that his green suit

was never worth five pounds; and nothing, we dare say, could have induced him to let it mount up to that sum. He would have it grow upon him, if he could, like a green monkey. Thus again, with his bowling-green. It was not penuriousness that hindered him from altering it; but he had no more idea of changing the place than the place itself. As change of habit is frightful to some men, from vivacity of affection or imagination, and the strangeness which they anticipate in the novelty, so he was never tempted out of custom, because he had no idea of anything else. He would no more think of altering the place he burrowed in than a tortoise or a wild rabbit. He was *feroe naturoe*—a regular beast of prey; though he mingled something of the generosity of the lion with the lurking of the fox and the mischievous sporting of the cat. He would let other animals feed with him, only warning them off occasionally with that switch of his, instead of a claw. He had the same liberality of instinct towards the young of other creatures as we see in the hen and the goat. He would take care of their eggs, if he had a mind; or furnish them with milk. His very body was badger-like. It was “very low, very strong, and very active”; and he had a coarse fell of hair. A good housewife might evidently call his house a kennel, without being abusive. What the ladies of the Huntingdon family thought, if ever they came to it, we do not know; but next to hearing such a fellow as Squire Western talk, must have been the horror of his human kindred in

treading those menageries, his hall and parlour.

Then the marrow-bones, the noise, and, to a delicate ankle, the sense of danger! Conceive a timid stranger, not very welcome, obliged to pass through the great hall. The whole animal world is up. The well-mouthed hounds begin barking, the mastiff bays, the terriers snap, the hawks sidle and stare, the poultry gobble, the cats growl and up with their backs. At last, the Hastings makes his appearance, and laughs like a goblin.

Three things are specially observable in our hero: first, that his religion as well as literature was so entirely confined to faith as to allow him to turn his household chapel into a larder, and do anything else he pleased, short of not ranking the Bible and "Book of Martyrs" with his other fixtures; second, that he carried the prudential instinct above mentioned to a pitch very unusual in a country squire, who can rarely refrain from making extremes meet with humanity in this instance; and third, that his proneness to the animal part of love, never finding him in a condition to be so brutal as drinking renders a gallant of this sort, left himself as well as others in sufficient good-humour, not only to get him forgiven by the females, but to act kindly, and be tolerated by the men. He was as temperate in his liquor as one of his cats, just drinking to quench his thirst, and leaving off when he had enough. This perhaps was partly owing to his rank, which did not render it necessary to his importance to be emulous with his bottle among squires. As to some grave questions connected

with the promiscuous nature of his amours, an animal so totally given up to his instincts as he was, both selfish and social, can hardly be held responsible upon such points; though they are worth the consideration of those who in their old age undertake to be moral as well as profligate. If Mr. Hasting's notion was good and even useful, so far as it showed the natural good-humour of that passion in human beings, where sickness or jealousy is out of the question, in every other respect it was as poor and paltry as can be. There was not a single idea in it beyond one of his hounds. It was entirely gross and superficial, without sentiment, without choice, without a thousand sensations of pleasure and the return of it, without the least perception of a beauty beyond the mere absence of age. The most idiotical scold in the village, "under forty," was to him a desirable object. The most lovable woman in the world, above it, was lost upon him. Such lovers do not even enjoy the charms they suppose. They do not see a twentieth part of its very external graces. They criticize beauty in the language of a horse-jockey; and the jockey, or the horse himself, knows just as much about it as they.

In short, to be candid on all sides with the very earthly memory of the Hon. William Hastings, we look upon a person of his description to be a very good specimen of the animal part of human nature, and chiefly on this account, that the animal preserves its health. There indeed it has something to say for itself; nor must we

ESSAYS

conceal our persuasion that upon this ground alone Mr. Hastings must have had sensations in the course of his life which many an intellectual person might envy. If his perceptions were of a vague sort, they must have been exquisitely clear and unalloyed. He must have had all the pleasure from the sunshine and the fresh air that a healthy body without a mind in it can have; and we may guess, from the days of childhood, what those feelings may resemble, in their pleasantness as well as vagueness. At the age of a hundred he was able to read and write without spectacles; not better, perhaps, than he did at fifteen, but as well. At a hundred, he was truly an old boy, and no more thought of putting on spectacles than an eagle. Why should he? His blood had run clear for a century with exercise and natural living. He had not baked it black and "heavy thick" over a fire, and dimmed the windows of his perception with the smoke.

But he wanted a soul to turn his perceptions to their proper account? He did so. Let us then, who see more than he did, contrive to see fair-play between body and mind. It is by observing the separate extremes of perfection, to which body and mind may arrive, in those who do not know how to unite both, that we may learn how to produce a human being more enviable either than the healthiest of fox-hunters or the most unearthly of saints. It is remarkable that the same ancient family which, among the variety and fineness of its productions, put forth this specimen of bodily humanity, edified the

world not long after with as complete a specimen of the other half of human nature. Mr. William Hastings's soul seems to have come too late for his body, and to have remained afterwards upon earth in the shape of his fair kinswoman, the Lady Elizabeth Hastings, daughter of Theophilus, seventh Earl of Huntingdon. An account of her follows that of her animal kinsman, and is a most extraordinary contrast. This is the lady who is celebrated by Sir Richard Steele in the *Tatler*, under the name of Aspasia—a title which must have startled her a little. But with the elegance of the panegyric she would have found it hard not to be pleased, notwithstanding her modesty. "These ancients would be as much astonished to see in the same age so illustrious a pattern to all who love things praiseworthy as the divine Aspasia. Methinks I now see her walking in her garden like our first parent, with unaffected charms, before beauty had spectators, and bearing celestial, conscious virtue in her aspect. Her countenance is the lively picture of her mind, which is the seat of honour, truth, compassion knowledge, and innocence—

There dwells the scorn of vice, and pity too.

In the midst of the most ample fortune, and veneration of all that beheld and knew her, without the least affectation, she consults retirement, the contemplation of her own being, and that Supreme Power which bestowed it. Without the learning of schools, or knowledge of a long

course of arguments, she goes on in a steady course of uninterrupted piety and virtue, and adds to the severity and privacy of the last age all the freedom and ease of this. The language and mien of a Court she is possessed of in the highest degree; but the simplicity and humble thoughts of a cottage are her more welcome entertainments. Aspasia is a female philosopher, who does not only live up to the resignation of the most retired lives of the ancient sages, but also to the schemes and plans which they thought beautiful, though inimitable."

This character was written when Lady Elizabeth was twenty-eight. She passed the rest of her life agreeably to it, relieving families, giving annuities, contributing to the maintenance of schools and university scholars, and all the while behaving with extraordinary generosity to her kindred, and keeping up a noble establishment.

It seems pretty clear from all accounts that this noble-hearted woman, notwithstanding her beauty and sweet temper, was as imperfect a specimen of the comfortable in body as her kinsman was in mind. We are far from meaning to prefer his state of existence. We confess, indeed, that there are many we have read of, whom we would prefer being, to the most saintly of solitary spirits; but the mere reflection of the good which Lady Elizabeth did to others would not allow us a moment's hesitation, if compelled to choose between inhabiting her infirm tenement and the jolly

vacuity of the Hon. William. He was all bodily comfort; she was all mental grace.

What, then, is our conclusion? This: that the proper point of humanity lies between these two natures, though not at equal distances—the greatest possible sum of happiness for mankind demanding that great part of our pleasure should be founded in that of others. Those, however, who hold rigid theories of morality, and yet practise them not (which is much oftener the case with such theories than the reverse), must take care how they flatter themselves they at all resemble Lady Elizabeth Hastings. Their extreme difference with her kinsman is a mere cant, to which all the privileged selfishness and sensuality in the world give the lie—all the pomps and vanities, all the hatreds, all the malignities, all the eatings and drinkings, such as William Hastings himself would have been ashamed of. In fact, their real instincts are generally as selfish as his, though in other shapes, and much less agreeable for everybody. When cant lives as long a life as his, or as good a one as hers, it will be worth attending to. Till then, the best things to advise is, neither to be canting, nor merely animal, nor over-spiritual; but to endeavour to enjoy, with the greatest possible distribution of happiness, all the faculties we receive from nature.

ON THE TALKING OF NONSENSE

There is no greater mistake in the world than the looking upon every sort of nonsense as want of sense. Nonsense, in the bad sense of the word, is very fond of bestowing its own appellation, particularly upon what renders other persons agreeable. But nonsense, in the good sense of the word, is a very sensible thing in its season; and is only confounded with the other by people of a shallow gravity, who cannot afford to joke.

These gentlemen live upon credit, and would not have it inquired into. They are perpetual beggars of the question. They are grave, not because they think, or feel the contrast of mirth, for then they would feel the mirth itself; but because gravity is their safest mode of behaviour. They must keep their minds sitting still, because they are incapable of a motion that is not awkward. They are waxen images among the living; the deception is undone if the others stir; or hollow vessels covered up, which may be taken for full ones; the collision of wit jars against them, and strikes but their hollowness.

In fact, the difference between nonsense not worth talking, and nonsense worth it, is simply this: the former is the result of a want of ideas, the latter of a superabundance of them. This is remarkably exemplified by Swift's "Polite Conversation," in which the dialogue, though intended to be a tissue of the greatest nonsense in request with shallow merriment, is in reality

full of ideas, and many of them very humorous; but then they are all commonplace, and have been said so often, that the thing uppermost in your mind is the inability of the speakers to utter a sentence of their own; they have no ideas at all. Many of the jokes and similes in that treatise are still the current coin of the shallow; though they are now pretty much confined to gossips of an inferior order, and the upper part of the lower classes.

On the other hand, the wildest rattling, as it is called, in which men of sense find entertainment, consists of nothing but a quick and original succession of ideas—a finding, as it were, of something in nothing—a rapid turning of the hearer's mind to some new phase of thought and sparkling imagery. The man of shallow gravity, besides an uneasy half-consciousness that he has nothing of the sort about him, is too dull of perception to see the delicate links between one thought and another; and he takes that for a mere chaos of laughing jargon, in which finer apprehensions perceive as much delightful association as men of musical taste do in the most tricksome harmonies and accompaniments of Mozart or Beethoven. Between such gravity and such mirth there is as much difference as between the driest and dreariest psalmody, and that exquisite laughing trio—"E voi ridete"—which is sung in "*Così fan tutte*." A Quakers' coat and a garden are not more dissimilar; nor a death-bell and the birds after a sunny shower.

It is on such occasions, indeed, that we enjoy the perfection of what is agreeable in humanity—the harmony of mind and body—intellect and animal spirits. Accordingly, the greatest geniuses appear to have been proficient in this kind of nonsense, and to have delighted in dwelling upon it and attributing it to their favourites. Virgil is no joker, but Homer is; and there is the same difference between their heroes, Æneas and Achilles, the latter of whom is also a player on the harp. Venus, the most delightful of the goddesses, is Philommeides, the laughter-loving; an epithet, by-the-by, which might give a good hint to a number of very respectable ladies, “who love their lords,” but who are too apt to let ladies less respectable run away with them. Horace represents Pleasantry as fluttering about Venus in company with Cupid—

Quem Jocus circumvolat, et Cupido;

and these are followed by Youth, the enjoyer of animal spirits, and by Mercury, the god of Persuasion. There is the same difference between Tasso and Ariosto as between Virgil and Homer; that is to say, the latter proves his greater genius by a completer and more various hold on the feelings, and has not only a fresher spirit of Nature about him, but a truer, because a happier; for the want of this enjoyment is at once a defect and a deterioration. It is more or less a disease of the blood; a falling off from the pure and uncontradicted

blithesomeness of childhood; a hampering of the mind with the altered nerves; dust gathered in the watch, and perplexing our passing hours.

It may be thought a begging of the question to mention Anacreon, since he made an absolute business of mirth and enjoyment, and sat down systematically to laugh as well as to drink. But on that very account, perhaps, his case is still more in point; and Plato, one of the gravest, but not the shallowest of philosophers, gave him the title of the Wise. The disciple of Socrates appears also to have been a great enjoyer of Aristophanes; and the divine Socrates himself was a wit and a joker.

But the divine Shakespeare—the man to whom we go for everything, and are sure to find it, grave, melancholy, or merry—what said he to this exquisite kind of nonsense? Perhaps next to his passion for detecting nature, and over-informing it with poetry, he took delight in pursuing a joke; and the lowest scenes of his in this way say more to men whose faculties are fresh about them, and who prefer enjoyment to criticism, than the most doting of commentators can find out. They are instances of his animal spirits, of his sociality, of his passion for giving and receiving pleasure, of his enjoyment of something wiser than wisdom.

The greatest favourites of Shakespeare are made to resemble himself in this particular. Hamlet, Mercutio, Touchstone, Jaques, Richard the Third, and Falstaff, “inimitable Falstaff,” are all men of wit and humour, modified

according to their different temperaments or circumstances; some from health and spirits, others from sociality, others from a contrast with their very melancholy. Indeed, melancholy itself, with the profoundest intellects, will rarely be found to be anything else than a sickly temperament, induced or otherwise, preying in its turn upon the disappointed expectation of pleasure; upon the contradiction of hopes, which this world is not made to realize, though, let us never forget, it is made, as they themselves prove, to suggest. Some of Shakespeare's characters, as Mercutio and Benedick, are almost entirely made up of wit and animal spirits; and delightful fellows they are, and ready, from their very state, to perform the most serious and manly offices. Most of his women, too, have an abundance of natural vivacity. Desdemona herself is so pleasant of intercourse in every way, that, upon the principle of the respectable mistakes above mentioned, the Moor, when he grows jealous, is tempted to think it a proof of her want of honesty. But we must make Shakespeare speak for himself, or we shall not know how to be silent on this subject. What a description is that which he gives of a man of mirth—of a mirth, too, which he has expressly stated to be within the limit of what is becoming! It is in "Love's Labour's Lost":—

*A merrier man,
 Within the limit of becoming mirth,
 I never spent an hour's talk withal.*

LEIGH HUNT

*His eye begets occasion for his wit :
For every object that the one doth catch,
The other turns to a mirth-moving jest;
Which his fair tongue, conceit's expositor,
Delivers in such apt and gracious words,
That aged ears play truant at his tales,
And younger hearings are quite ravished;
So sweet and voluble is his discourse.*

We have been led into these reflections, partly to introduce the conclusion of this article; partly from being very fond of a joke ourselves, and so making our self-love as proud as possible; and partly from having spent some most agreeable hours the other evening with a company, the members of which had all the right to be grave and disagreeable that rank and talent are supposed to confer, and yet, from the very best sense or forgetfulness of both, were as lively and entertaining to each other as boys. Not one of them, perhaps, but had his cares—one or two, of no ordinary description; but what then? These are the moments, if we can take advantage of them, when sorrows are shared, even unconsciously; moments, when melancholy intermits her fever, and hope takes a leap into enjoyment; when the pilgrim of life, if he cannot lay aside his burden, forgets it in meeting his fellows about a fountain, and soothes his weariness and his resolution with the sparkling sight, and the noise of the freshness.

To come to our anticlimax, for such we are afraid it must be called after all this grave sentiment and mention of authorities. The

following dialogue is the substance of a joke, never meant for its present place, that was started the other day upon a late publication. The name of the book it is not necessary to mention, especially as it was pronounced to be one of the driest that had appeared for years. We cannot answer for the sentences being put to their proper speakers. The friends whom we value most happen to be great hunters in this way; and the reader may look upon the thing as a specimen of a joke run down, or of the sort of nonsense above mentioned; so that he will take due care how he professes not to relish it. We must also advertise him, that a proper quantity of giggling and laughter must be supposed to be interspersed, till towards the end it gradually becomes too great to go on with.

A. Did you ever see such a book?

B. Never, in all my life. It's as dry as a chip.

A. As a chip? A chip's a slice of orange to it.

B. Ay, or a wet sponge.

A. Or a cup in a current tart.

B. Ah, ha; so it is. You feel as if you were fingering a brickbat.

A. It makes you feel dust in the eyes.

B. It is impossible to shed a tear over it. The lachrymal organs are dried up.

A. If you shut it hastily, it is like clapping together a pair of fresh-cleaned gloves.

LEIGH HUNT

B. Before you have got far in it, you get up to look at your tongue in a glass.

A. It absolutely makes you thirsty.

B. Yes. If you take it up at breakfast, you drink four cups instead of two.

A. At page 30 you call for beer.

B. They say it made a Reviewer take to drinking.

A. They have it lying on the table at inns to make you drink double. The landlord says, "A new book, sir," and goes out to order two neguses.

B. It dries up everything so, it has ruined the draining business.

A. There is an Act of Parliament to forbid people's passing a vintner's with it in their pockets.

B. The Dutch subscribed for it to serve them instead of dykes.

ON SEEING A PIGEON MAKE LOVE

The following verses were suggested by a sight of a pigeon making love. The scene took place in a large sitting-room, where a beau might have followed a lady up and down with as bustling a solicitation; he could not have done it with more. The birds had been brought there for sale; but they knew more of this than two lovers whom destiny has designs upon. The gentleman was as much at his ease as if he had been a Bond Street loungeur pursuing his fair in a solitary street. We must add, as an

excuse for the abruptness of the exordium, that the house [the Casa Saluzzi, at Albaro, near Genoa] belonged to a poet of our acquaintance [Lord Byron], who was in the room at the same time.

*Is not the picture strangely like?
Doesn't the very bowing strike?
Can any art of love in fashion
Express a more prevailing passion?
That air—that sticking to her side—
That deference, ill concealing pride,—
That seeming consciousness of coat,
And repetition of one note,—
Ducking and tossing back his head,
As if at every bow he said,
“Madam, by Heaven,”—or “Strike me dead.”*

*And then the lady! look at her:
What bridling sense of character!
How she declines, and seems to go,
Yet still endures him to and fro;
Carrying her plumes and pretty clothings,
Blushing stare, and mutter'd nothings,
Body plump, and airy feet,
Like any charmer in a street.*

*Give him a hat beneath his wing,
And is not he the very thing?
Give her a parasol or plaything,
And is not she the very she-thing?*

Our companion, who had run the round of the great world, seemed to be rather mortified than otherwise at this spectacle. It was certainly calculated, at first blush, to damp the pride of the circles: but upon reflection it seemed to afford a considerable lift to beaux and belles in ordinary. It seemed to show how much of instinct, and of the common unreflecting course

of things, there is even in the gallantries of those who flatter themselves that they are vicious. Nobody expects wisdom in these persons; and if they can be found to be less guilty than is supposed, the gain is much: for, as to letting the dignity of human nature depend upon theirs, on the one hand, or expecting to bring about any change in their conduct by lecturing them on their faults, on the other, it is a speculation equally hopeless.

The description given in the verses is true to the letter. The reader must not think it is a poetical exaggeration. If he has ever witnessed an exhibition of the kind, he has no conception of the high human hand with which these pigeons carry it. The poets, indeed, time out of mind, have taken amatory illustrations from them; but the literal courtship surpasses them all. One sight of a pigeon paying his addresses would be sufficient to unsettle in our minds all those proud conclusions which we draw respecting the difference between reason and instinct. If this is mere instinct as distinguished from reason, if a bird follows another bird up and down by a simple mechanical impulse, giving himself all the airs and graces imaginable, exciting as many in his mistress, and uttering every moment articulate sounds which we are no more bound to suppose deficient in meaning than a pigeon would be warranted in supposing the same of our own speech, then reason itself may be no more than a mechanical impulse. It has nothing better to show for it. Our mechanism

ESSAYS

may possess a greater variety of movements, and be more adapted to a variety of circumstances; but if there is not variety here, and an adaptation to circumstances, we know not where there is. If it be answered, that pigeons would never make love in any other manner, under any circumstances, we do not know that. Have people observed them sufficiently to know that they always make love equally well? If they have varied at any time, they may vary again. Our own modes of courtship are undoubtedly very numerous, and some of them are as different from others as the courtship of the pigeon itself from that of the hog. But though we are observers of ourselves, have we yet observed other animals sufficiently to pronounce upon the limits of their capacity? We are apt to suppose that all sheep and oxen resemble one another in the face. The slightest observation convinces us that their countenances are as various as those of men. How are we to know that the shades and modifications of their character and conduct are not as various? A well-drilled nation would hardly look more various in the eyes of a bee, than a swarm of bees does in our own. The minuter differences in our conduct would escape them for want of the habit of observing us, and because their own are of another sort. How are we to say that we do not judge them as ill?

We have read of some beavers, that when they were put into a situation very different from their ordinary one, and incited to build a house,

they set about their work in a style as ingeniously adapted as possible to their new circumstances. The individuals of the same race of animals are not all equally clever, any more than ourselves. The more they come under our inspection (as in the case of dogs), the more varieties we discern in their characters and understandings. The most philosophical thing hitherto said on this subject appears to be that of Pope.

“How do we know,” he asked one day, “that we have a right to kill creatures that we are so little above as dogs, for our curiosity, or even for some use to us?” SPENCE—“I used to carry it too far: I thought they had reason as well as we.” POPE—“So they have, to be sure. All our disputes about that are only disputes about words. Man has reason enough only to know what is necessary for him to know, and dogs have just that too.” SPENCE—“But then they have souls too, as imperishable in their nature as ours?” POPE—“And what harm would that be to us?”

All this passage is admirable, and helps to make us love, as we ought to do, a man who has contributed so much to the entertainment of the world.

There is a well-authenticated story of a dog, who, having been ill-treated by a larger one, went and brought a still larger dog to avenge his cause, and see justice done him. When does a human necessity reason better than this? The greatest distinction between men and other animals appears to consist in this, that the

former make a point of cultivating their reason; and yet it is impossible to say that nothing of the kind has ever been done by the latter. Birds and beasts in general do not take the trouble of going out of their ordinary course; but is the ambition of the common run of human beings any greater? Have not peasants and mechanics, and even those who flourish and grow learned under establishments, an equal tendency to deprecate the necessity of innovation? A farmer would go on with his old plough, a weaver with his old loom, and a placeman with his old opinions, to all eternity, if it were not for the restlessness of individuals; and these are forced to battle their way against a thousand prejudices, even to do the greatest good. An established critic has not always a right to triumph over the learned pig.

With respect to other animals going to heaven, our pride smiles in a sovereign manner at this speculation. We have no objection, somehow, to a mean origin; but we insist that nothing less dignified than ourselves can be immortal. We are sorry we cannot settle the question. We confess (if the reader will allow us to suppose that we shall go to heaven, which does not require much modesty, considering all those who appear to be certain of doing so) we would fain have as much company as possible; and He was of no different opinion, who told us that a time should come when the sucking child should play with the asp. We see that the poet had no more objection to his dog's company in a

state of bliss, than the "poor Indian," of whom he [Pope] speaks in his Essay. We think we could name other celebrated authors, who would as lief take their dogs into the next world as a king or a bishop, and yet they have no objection to either. We may conceive much less pleasant additions to our society than a flock of doves, which, indeed, have a certain fitness for an Elysian state. We would confine our argument to one simple question, which the candid reader will allow us to ask him:—"Does not *Tomkins* go to heaven?" It is difficult to think that many beasts and birds are not as fit to go to heaven at once as many human beings—people who talk of their seats there with as much confidence as if they had booked their names for them at a box-office. To our humble taste, the goodness and kindness in the countenance of a faithful dog are things that appear almost as fit for heaven as serenity in a human being. The prophets of old, in their visions, saw nothing to hinder them from joining the faces of other animals with those of men. The spirit that moved the animal was everything.

It was the opinion of a late writer, that the immortality of the soul depended on the cultivation of the intellect. He could not conceive how the sots and fools that abound on this earth could have any pretensions to eternity; or with what feelings they were to enter upon their new condition. There appears to be too much of the pride of intellect in this opinion, and too little allowance for circumstances; and yet, if

the dispensation that is to take us to heaven is of the exclusive kind that some would make it, this is surely the more noble dogma.

To conclude with the pleasant animals with whom we commenced, there is a flock of pigeons in the neighbourhood where we are writing [at Maiano, near Florence], whom we might suppose to be enjoying a sort of heaven on earth. The place is fit to be their paradise. There is plenty of food for them, the dovecots are excellent, the scene full of vines in summer-time, and of olives all the year round. It happens, in short, to be the very spot where Boccaccio is said to have laid the scene of his "Decameron." He lived there himself. Fiesole is on the height; the Valley of Ladies in the hollow; the brooks are all poetical and celebrated. As we behold this flock of doves careering about the hamlet, and whitening in and out of the green trees, we cannot help fancying that they are the souls of the gentle company in the "Decameron," come to enjoy in peace their old neighbourhood. We think, as we look at them, that they are now as free from intrusion and scandal as they are innocent; and that no falcon would touch them, for the sake of the story they told of him.

Ovid, in one of his elegies, tells us that birds have a Paradise near Elysium. Doves, be sure, are not omitted. But peacocks and parrots go there also. The poet was more tolerant in his *orni-theology* than the priests in Delphos, who, in the sacred groves about their temple, admitted doves, and doves only.

PANTOMIMES

He that says he does not like a pantomime, either says what he does not think, or is it not so wise as he fancies himself. He should grow young again, and get wiser. "The child," as the poet says, "is father to the man;" and in this instance he has a very degenerate offspring. Yes: John Tomkins, aged thirty-five, and not liking pantomimes, is a very unpromising little boy. Consider, Tomkins, you have still a serious regard for pudding, and are ambitious of being thought clever. Well, there is the clown who will sympathise with you in dumplings; and not to see into the cleverness of Harlequin's quips and metamorphoses is to want a perception which other little boys have by nature. Not to like pantomimes is not to like animal spirits: it is not to like motion; not to like love; not to like a jest upon dulness and formality; not to smoke one's uncle; not to like to see a thump in the face; not to laugh; not to fancy; not to like a holiday; not to know the pleasure of sitting up at Christmas; not to sympathise with one's children; not to remember that we have been children ourselves; nor that we shall grow old, and be as gouty as Pantaloon, if we are not as wise and as active as they.

Among the Italians, from whom we borrowed these popular entertainments, they consisted of a run of jokes upon the provincial peculiarities of their countrymen. Harlequin, with his giddy vivacity, was the representative of the inhabitant

of one State; Pantaloon, of the imbecile carefulness of another; the Clown, of the sensual, macaroni-eating Neapolitan, with his instinct for eschewing danger; and Columbine, Harlequin's mistress, was the type, not indeed of the outward woman, but of the inner girl of all the lasses in Italy—the tender fluttering heart—the little dove (*colombina*), ready to take flight with the first lover, and to pay off old scores with the gout and the jealousy, that had hitherto kept her in durance.

The reader has only to transfer the characters to those of his own countrymen, to have a lively sense of the effect which these national pictures must have had in Italy. Imagine Harlequin a gallant adventurer from some particular part of the land, full of life and fancy, sticking at no obstacles, leaping gates and windows, hitting off a satire at every turn, and converting the very scrapes he gets into matters of jest and triumph. The old gentleman that pursues him is a miser from some manufacturing town, whose ward he has run away with. The Clown is a London cockney, with a prodigious eye to his own comfort and muffins—a Lord Mayor's fool, who loved "everything that was good;" and Columbine is the boarding-school girl, ripe for running away with, and making a dance of it all the way from Chelsea to Gretna Green.

Pantomime is the satirist or caricaturist of the times. We sit among the shining faces on all sides of us, and fancy ourselves at this moment

enjoying it. What whim! what fancy! what eternal movement! The performers are like the blood in one's veins, never still; and the music runs with equal vivacity through the whole spectacle, like the pattern of a watered ribbon.

In comes Harlequin, demi-masked, parti-coloured, nimble-toed, lithe, agile; bending himself now this way, now that; bridling up like a pigeon; tipping out his toe like a dancer; then taking a fantastic skip; then standing ready at all points and at right angles with his omnipotent lath-sword, the emblem of the converting power of fancy and lightheartedness. Giddy as we think him, he is resolved to show us that his head can bear more giddiness than we fancy; and lo! beginning with it by degrees, he whirls it round into a very spin, with no more remorse than if it were a button. Then he draws his sword, slaps his enemy, who has just come upon him, into a settee; and springing upon him, dashes through the window like a swallow. Let us hope that Columbine and the high road are on the other side, that he is already a mile on the road to Gretna: for here comes Pantaloon. What a hobbling old rascal it is! How void of any handsome infirmity! His very gout is owing to his having lived upon twopence farthing. Not finding Harlequin and Columbine, he hobbles back to see what has become of that lazy fellow, the Clown.

He, the cunning rogue, who has been watching midway, and now sees the coast clear, enters in front—round-faced, goggle-eyed, knock-

kneaded, but agile to a degree of the dislocated, with a great smear for his mouth, and a cap on his head, half fool's and half cook's. Commend him to the dinner that he sees on table, and that was laid for Harlequin and his mistress. Merry be their hearts: there is a time for all things; and while they dance through a dozen inns to their hearts' content, he will eat a Sussex dumpling or so. Down he sits, contriving a luxurious seat, and inviting himself with as many ceremonies as if he had the whole day before him: but when he once begins, he seems as if he had not a moment to lose. The dumpling vanishes at a cram; the sausages are abolished: down go a dozen yards of macaroni: and he is in the act of paying his duties to a gallon of rum, when in comes Pantaloon in search of the glutton, furious, and resolved to pounce on the rascal headlong.

Ah—here comes Harlequin with his lass, fifty miles advanced in an hour, and caring nothing for his pursuers, though they have taken the steam-coach. Now the lovers dine indeed; and having had no motion to signify, join in a dance. Here Columbine shines as she ought to do. The little slender, but plump rogue! How she winds it hither and thither with her trim waist, and her waxen arms! now with a hand against her side, tripping it with no immodest insolence in a hornpipe; now undulating it in a waltz; or “caracoling” it, as Sir Thomas Urquhart would say, in the saltatory style of the opera—but always Columbine; always the little dove who

is to be protected; something less than the opera-dancer, and greater; more unconscious, yet not so; and ready to stretch her gauze wings for a flight, the moment Riches would tear her from Love.

Pantomime is certainly a representation of the vital principle of all things. Everything in it keeps moving; there is no more cessation than there is in nature; and though we may endeavour to fix our attention upon one mover or set of movers at a time, we are conscious that all are going on. The Clown, though we do not see him, is jogging somewhere; Pantaloon is still careering it; and when Harlequin and Columbine come in, do we fancy they have been resting behind the scenes? The notion! Look at them; they are evidently in full career: they have been, as well as are, dancing; and the music, which never ceases whether they are visible or not, tells us as much.

THE OLD GENTLEMAN

Our Old Gentleman, in order to be exclusively himself, must be either a widower or a bachelor. Suppose the former. We do not mention his precise age, which would be invidious; nor whether he wears his own hair or a wig, which would be wanting in universality. If a wig, it is a compromise between the more modern scratch and the departed glory of the toupee. If his own hair, it is white, in spite of his favourite grandson, who used to get on the chair behind him, and pull the silver hairs out, ten years ago. If he is bald at top, the hairdresser, hovering and breathing about him like a second youth, takes care to give the bald place as much powder as the covered; in order that he may convey to the sensorium within a pleasing indistinctness of idea respecting the exact limits of skin and hair. He is very clean and neat; and in warm weather is proud of opening his waistcoat half-way down, and letting so much of his frill be seen, in order to show his hardiness as well as taste. His watch and shirt-buttons are of the best; and he does not care if he has two rings on a finger. If his watch ever failed him at the club or coffee-house, he would take a walk every day to the nearest clock of good character, purely to keep it right. He has a cane at home, but seldom uses it, on finding it out of fashion with his elderly juniors. He has a small cocked hat for gala days, which he lifts higher from his head than the round one, when made a bow to.

In his pockets are two handkerchiefs (one for the neck at night-time), his spectacles, and his pocket-book. The pocket-book, among other things, contains a receipt for a cough, and some verses cut out of an odd sheet of an old magazine, on the lovely Duchess of A., beginning—

When beauteous Mira walks the plain.

He intends this for a commonplace-book which he keeps, consisting of passages in verse and prose cut out of newspapers and magazines, and pasted in columns; some of them rather gay. His principal other books are Shakespeare's Plays and Milton's "Paradise Lost;" the *Spectator*; the "History of England;" the works of Lady M. W. Montagu, Pope, and Churchill; Middleton's "Geography;" the *Gentleman's Magazine*; Sir John Sinclair on Longevity; several plays with portraits in character; "Account of Elizabeth Canning;" "Memoirs of George Ann Bellamy;" "Poetical Amusements at Bath-Easton;" Blair's works; "Elegant Extracts;" "Junius," as originally published; a few pamphlets on the American War and Lord George Gordon, etc.; and one on the French Revolution. In his sitting-rooms are some engravings from Hogarth and Sir Joshua; an engraved portrait of the Marquis of Granby; ditto of M. le Comte de Grasse surrendering to Admiral Rodney; a humorous piece after Penny; and a portrait of himself, painted by Sir Joshua. His wife's portrait is in his chamber, looking upon his bed. She is a little girl, stepping

forward with a smile and a pointed toe, as if going to dance. He lost her when she was sixty.

The Old Gentleman is an early riser, because he intends to live at least twenty years longer. He continues to take tea for breakfast, in spite of what is said against its nervous effects; having been satisfied on that point some years ago by Dr. Johnson's criticism on Hanway, and a great liking for tea previously. His china cups and saucers have been broken since his wife's death, all but one, which is religiously kept for his use. He passes his morning in walking or riding, looking in at auctions, looking after his India bonds, or some such money securities, furthering some subscription set on foot by his excellent friend Sir John, or cheapening a new old print for his portfolio. He also hears of the newspapers; not caring to see them till after dinner at the coffee-house. He may also cheapen a fish or so; the fishmonger soliciting his doubting eye as he passes, with a profound bow of recognition. He eats a pear before dinner.

His dinner at the coffee-house is served up to him at the accustomed hour, in the old accustomed way, and by the accustomed waiter. If William did not bring it, the fish would be sure to be stale, and the flesh new. He eats no tart; or, if he ventures on a little, takes cheese with it. You might as soon attempt to persuade him out of his senses, as that cheese is not good for digestion. He takes port; and if he has drunk more than usual, and in a more private place, may be induced, by some respectful inquiries

respecting the old style of music, to sing a song composed by Mr. Oswald or Mr. Lampe, such as—

Chloe, by that borrow'd kiss;

or—

Come, gentle god of soft repose;

or his wife's favourite ballad, beginning—

At Upton on the Hill

There lived a happy pair.

Of course, no such exploit can take place in the coffee-room; but he will canvass the theory of that matter there with you, or discuss the weather, or the markets, or the theatres, or the merits of "my Lord North," or "my Lord Rockingham;" for he rarely says simply lord; it is generally "my lord," trippingly and genteelly off his tongue. If alone after dinner, his great delight is the newspaper; which he prepares to read by wiping his spectacles, carefully adjusting them on his eyes, and drawing the candle close to him, so as to stand sideways betwixt his ocular aim and the small type. He then holds the paper at arm's length, and, dropping his eyelids half down and his mouth half open, takes cognizance of the day's information. If he leaves off, it is only when the door is opened by a newcomer, or when he suspects somebody is over-anxious to get the paper out of his hand. On these occasions, he gives an important "hem!" or so, and resumes.

In the evening, our Old Gentleman is fond of going to the theatre, or of having a game of

cards. If he enjoys the latter at his own house or lodgings, he likes to play with some friends whom he has known for many years; but an elderly stranger may be introduced, if quiet and scientific, and the privilege is extended to younger men of letters, who, if ill players, are good losers. Not that he is a miser; but to win money at cards is like proving his victory by getting the baggage, and to win of a younger man is a substitute for his not being able to beat him at rackets. He breaks up early, whether at home or abroad.

At the theatre, he likes a front row in the pit. He comes early, if he can do so without getting into a squeeze, and sits patiently waiting for the drawing up of the curtain, with his hands placidly lying, one over the other, on the top of his stick. He generously admires some of the best performers, but thinks them far inferior to Garrick, Woodward and Clive. During splendid scenes he is anxious that the little boy should see.

He has been induced to look in at Vauxhall again, but likes it still less than he did years back, and cannot bear it in comparison with Ranelagh. He thinks everthing looks poor, flaring and jaded. "Ah!" says he, with a sort of triumphant sigh, "Ranelagh was a noble place! Such taste, such elegance, such beauty! There was the Duchess of A., the finest woman in England, sir; and Mrs. L., a mighty fine creature; and Lady Susan What's-her-name, that had that unfortunate affair with Sir Charles.

Sir, they came swimming by you like the swans."

The Old Gentleman is very particular in having his slippers ready for him at the fire when he comes home. He is also extremely choice in his snuff, and delights to get a fresh boxful in Tavistock Street, on his way to the theatre. His box is a curiosity from India. He calls favourite young ladies by their Christian names, however slightly acquainted with them, and has a privilege also of saluting all brides, mothers, and indeed every species of lady, on the least holiday occasion. If the husband, for instance, has met with a piece of luck, he instantly moves forward, and gravely kisses the wife on the cheek. The wife then says, "My niece, sir, from the country;" and he kisses the niece. The niece, seeing her cousin biting her lips at the joke, says, "My cousin Harriet, sir;" and he kisses the cousin. He never recollects such weather, except during the Great Frost, or when he rode down with Jack Skrimshire to Newmarket. He grows young again in his little grandchildren, especially the one which he thinks most like himself, which is the handsomest. Yet he likes best, perhaps, the one most resembling his wife, and will sit with him on his lap, holding his hand in silence, for a quarter of an hour together. He plays most tricks with the former, and makes him sneeze. He asks little boys in general who was the father of Zebedee's children. If his grandsons are at school, he often goes to see them, and makes them blush by telling the master or the upper

ESSAYS

scholars that they are fine boys, and of a precocious genius. He is much struck when an old acquaintance dies, but adds that he lived too fast, and that poor Bob was a sad dog in his youth—"a very sad dog, sir, mightily set upon a short life and a merry one."

When he gets very old indeed, he will sit for whole evenings, and say little or nothing; but informs you that there is Mrs. Jones (the house-keeper)—"*She'll talk.*"

Printed by
E. WRIGHT and SONS,
Radcliffe-on-Trent, Notts.





PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

H&SS
A
2723

30



UTL AT DOWNSVIEW



D RANGE BAY SHLF POS ITEM C
39 09 09 02 08 010 6